

CULTURAL SCHEMATA IN ESL/EFL READING COMPREHENSION:

A DEVELOPMENTAL PERSPECTIVE



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### Abstract

The present study attempts to examine the role of cultural schemata in reading comprehension and to study, from a developmental perspective, children's acquisition of cultural schemata in the native culture and in a foreign culture.

As this study is exploratory in nature, a reading test was constructed with culturally-loaded short comprehension texts on British culture, American culture and Chinese culture to determine the availability of the appropriate cultural schemata from 210 British and Chinese subjects coming from 2 English schools and 2 Anglo-Chinese schools respectively. Random stratified sampling was adopted to recruit subjects coming from Secondary 1, 3 and 5; variables such as sex, age, length of stay in Hong Kong and socio-economic backgrounds were controlled. Cultural knowledge was assessed in three observable and daily-life related areas: tradition and customs, attitudes and values, and beliefs.

Scores showed that subjects had better performance in the native culture than in the foreign culture. In two-way ANOVAs of reading scores related to form and status, the main effects were found to be significant in all cultures. But the interaction effects were all insignificant except in Chinese culture. One-way ANOVA of the Chinese scores further revealed that British subjects did not show any significant score differences in all three secondary levels. Other scores showed a developmental trend in the native culture and in the foreign

culture for both the British and the Chinese subjects.

Results in Tukey's HSD procedures also revealed significant differences in the subjects' performance on native and foreign cultures between different, and within the same, age groups. Null hypotheses which relate age and cultural knowledge scores in this study were mostly rejected. Pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research were discussed.



## Chapter 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 The Problem

Realizing the importance of reading in acquiring information in our society, in academic pursuit and in personal development, the combat against reading deficiency is a cause which has attracted more supporters than any other educational enterprise in the twentieth century.

A considerable amount of research has been conducted to enrich our understanding of the complex reading process. Various models have been presented to explain the reading mechanism. Different methodologies for normal and remedial teaching have been offered to improve the reading proficiency of both the L1 and L2 readers. Yet, some reading difficulties, particularly comprehension at the inferential level, still remain unsolved. Clearly, the acquisition of lists of hierarchical subskills (Rosenshine, 1980) for text decoding does not necessarily lead to effective reading comprehension.

Research in the tradition of cognitive psychology in the last decade has suggested the necessity and the availability of appropriate schemata for text comprehension (Carrell, 1987; Hudson, 1982; Johnson, 1982, Steffensen, Joag-dev and Anderson, 1979). Experimental studies have unanimously highlighted the notion that "many reading problems may be traceable to mismatches

between background knowledge presumed in a given text and that actually possessed by the reader" (Spiro, 1980:259).

But to date, no research with a developmental orientation exploring the role of the specific cultural schemata in the success and failure in ESL/EFL reading comprehension has been reported. Certainly results of this kind of studies will have tremendous educational implications for helping children's reading development.



## 1.2 Rationale for the Study

In a practical sense, much of the text processing research (Carrell, 1987; Johnson, 1981; Nelson, 1987; Perkins and Angelis, 1985) lacks applicability in educational settings, as the subjects in most research were adults with intermediate/advanced English proficiency at the university level. Little research has been done to date on the role of cultural variables in children's reading. Though the study of Pearson, Hansen and Gordon (1979) on the applicability of schema-theoretic notions to young children's comprehension of textually explicit and inferrable information has indicated a significant prior knowledge effect on the inferrable knowledge, the two passages used in their study were non-culture-specific. More importantly, no studies have directly addressed to prior cultural knowledge on slot-filling inferences in children's ESL/EFL reading from a developmental perspective.

It is hoped that the present study will fill the gap by providing insight and relevant information for a better understanding in children's development of cultural schemata. More specifically, the following research questions will be examined:

1. Are there any significant differences in the availability of the overall cultural schema on native culture among children of different age groups?

2. Are there any significant differences in the availability of specific cultural schemata on native culture among children of different age groups?
3. Are there any significant differences in the availability of overall cultural schema on foreign culture among children of different age groups?
4. Are there any significant differences in the availability of specific cultural schemata on foreign culture among children of different age groups?
5. Are there any significant differences in the availability of overall cultural schema on different cultures among children of the same age groups?
6. Are there any significant differences in the availability of specific cultural schemata on different cultures among children of the same age groups?



### 1.3 Significance of the Study

This study should provide useful data on the availability of cultural schemata on native culture as well as foreign culture for ESL/EFL reading comprehension from a developmental perspective. The present study is basically a quantitative measure of cultural schemata in some cultural domains. It should provide quantitative data in native cultural schemata and foreign cultural schemata among children of different ages. The study should also provide information on whether there are significant differences in the acquisition of native cultural schemata and foreign cultural schemata among children of the same age.

It is also hoped that a developmental picture of the acquisition of specific cultural schemata can be obtained. The study should also carry pedagogical implications to help children have more fun and pleasure in ESL/EFL reading comprehension.

#### 1.4 Definition of Terms

##### Schemata:

'the building blocks of cognition' (Rumelhart, 1980). According to schema theorists, schemata represent "generic concepts which are stored in memory. These generic concepts include underlying objects, situations, events, actions, and sequences of actions. These concepts are not atomic, but contain the network of interrelations with other constituent concepts. ... People store and arrange their knowledge and experiences as schemata to use in interpreting new experiences. Many researchers think schemata are structures with 'slots' for adding new information to existing information" (Lange, 1981:442-443).

##### Formal schemata:

"knowledge relative to the formal, rhetorical organizational structures of different types of texts" (Carrell, 1987). It "embodies knowledge of discourse conventions that signal organization, with specialized conventions characteristic of distinct text forms and other conventions common to most text forms. These organizational schemata include a story schema, a personal letter schema, a news article schema, a scientific report schema, and so on" (Lange, 1981:443).

##### Content schemata:

"knowledge relative to the content domain of the text" (Carrell, 1987). It "embodies the reader's existing knowledge of real and imaginary worlds" (Lange, 1981:443). A content schema has its own definite specificity, such as culture-specific, discipline-specific, and so on.

##### Culture:

In this study, culture is confined to the "small c culture" (Oswalt, 1970:15) which encompasses the "lifeway of a population" in the anthropological sense. The "large C culture" is excluded in this study as it encompasses the economic, social, political history, literature, art, etc. of the country which "may not contribute significantly to the students' ability to function linguistically and socially to



their intercultural understanding" (Chastain, 1976:388).

Thus culture is defined, similar to Adler (1977) and Singer (1987), as a pattern of group-related perceptions including attitudes, values, belief systems, which is accepted and expected by an identity group. In addition, tradition and customs are included as cultural components in this study.

For the purpose of the present study, cultural knowledge is operationalized under three concrete, observable and daily-life related areas: tradition and customs, attitudes and values, and beliefs.

#### Attitudes:

Attitudes are defined as "likes and dislikes. They are our affinities for, and our aversions to, situations, objects, persons, groups, or any other identifiable aspect of our environment" (Bem, 1970:14).

#### Belief system:

It represents the conscious and unconscious beliefs, sets, expectancies or hypotheses that a person at a given time accepts as true of the world she or he lives in.

#### Value system:

A cultural value system "represents what is expected or hoped for, required or forbidden" and it is "the inductively based, logically ordered set of criteria of evaluations" (Albert, 1968:288) by which conduct is judged and sanctions applied.

#### Tradition and customs:

They are regarded as usual practices within an identity group. In every social occasion, they are the "standards for deciding what is ... for deciding what can be ... for deciding what one feels about it ... and for deciding what to do about it" (Goodenough, 1961:522; cited in Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey, 1988:28).

## Chapter 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

In the first part of this chapter, two conventional skills approaches in reading, namely the bottom-up model and the top-down model, are reviewed. The prevailing schema-theoretic model is then examined to provide a general understanding of the comprehension process.

Next, the role of cultural knowledge in EFL/ESL reading comprehension is discussed with results from recent research. The interweaving relationship between language and culture is also examined. Lastly, the review on previous developmental studies in reading furnishes us with what has already been investigated in the past and particularly what schema-related developmental research has been done.



## 2.1 Conventional Skills Approaches in Reading

### 2.1.1 Bottom-up model

The bottom-up model has been regarded as the most common approach in reading. The model originates from the notion that the meaning of text is in the linguistic text itself, which was widely accepted under the profound influence of Chomskyan transformational grammar (Chomsky, 1965; Katz and Fodor, 1963; Katz and Postal, 1964) and was strongly supported by psychologists in the sixties (e.g. Clark, 1969). Surface structures are derived from deep structures which receive interpretation from the semantic component. The deep structure of a sentence, after going through a purely linguistic interpretive procedure, provides "a full analysis of its cognitive meaning" (Katz and Postal, 1964:12). As Spiro (1980:247-8) noted, "The interpretive procedure consists primarily in a look-up of fixed word meanings in an internal lexicon followed by applying pre-existing projection rules from a finite set which, in combination with the functional relations specified in the deep structure, yield the one and only semantic interpretation of a given sentence."

In Gough's (1972) framework, reading is seen as being in an ordered series of transformation, with incoming information first registered in memory, then transformed to phonemic representation, then blended into words and combinations of words, and finally transformed to deep structure representations



for interpretation and comprehension.

LaBerge and Samuels (1974) presented a similar model with memory systems controlling different representations of incoming information: visual memory deals with visually based representations such as letters and words; phonological or auditory memory deals with phonemically analysed representations of spelling and word groups; semantic memory deals with semantic representations of words and sentences.

In the above models, reading is seen as a data-driven mode of text processing which consists of separate stages, with information transmitted from one stage to another, increasing in complexity as it goes on and each stage serving as a basis for subsequent analysis. Linguistic input is transformed, stage by stage, from lower to higher levels, with lower levels capable of influencing later stages but not vice versa, i.e. there can be no two-way interactions between stages. Readers passively decode visual stimuli. There is a fixed series of stages, from features, to letters, to spelling patterns, to visual word representations, to phonological word representations, to word meanings, and to word group meanings. There is no allowance for higher level stages to modify or back-influence the analysis at lower levels.

Pedagogically, the emphasis of the bottom-up model on stages of reading in the serial models misleads classroom practitioners into the false notion of hierarchies of subskills



which can be trained separately. However "no clear evidence was found for 'distinct reading skills or for a skill hierarchy" (Rosenshine 1980:535) as there is no available research to substantiate the notion that reading subskills are separable and at the same time there is very limited consistency among skills on the lists.

The bottom-up models have been strongly criticized by Stanovich (1980). First, the notion that letter perception comes before word perception seems to be open to challenge. Word and letter perception should occur simultaneously. Second, word perception is clearly affected by syntactical and semantic processing and therefore the initial stage of processing may not be word perception. At the same time, semantics may also affect understanding of syntax, and vice versa. Again this is not possible according to the hierarchical processing order of the bottom-up theory. Third, there is clear evidence from Goodman (1970) that the meaning of the entire sentence determines the meanings of specific words. In short, the initial processing of input symbols seems to be in some way under the influence and control of higher level analysis.

#### 2.1.2 Top-down model

In the seventies, reading theory has been under the influence of psycholinguistics. Goodman (1969, 1970) presented a top-down model in which reading is described as a 'psycholinguistic



guessing game'. As he elaborated it, "reading is a process in which the reader picks and chooses from the available information only enough to select and predict a language structure which is decodable" (Goodman 1969). Again, "reading is a selective process. It involves partial use of available minimal language clues selected from perceptual input on the basis of the reader's expectation. As this partial information is processed, tentative decisions are made, to be confirmed, rejected or refined as reading progresses" (Goodman 1970:260). According to Goodman (1969), "the proficient reader uses the least amount of information to make the best possible guesses."

Goodman (1981) has maintained that reading is an interaction between higher order thinking and lower order language analysis. Effective reading results from the skilful selection of useful clues which allow the reader to guess or anticipate what is to be read. However Cambourne (1977) has challenged Goodman's notion that a thinking process is operating independently from the reading process.

Closely allied to Goodman's model, Smith (1971, 1973) proposed another 'top-down' model. In his model, reading is based on asking questions about the printed text. The reading process is entirely an ask-and-answer activity in which relevant answers are found from the text. According to Smith, a skilled reader may be defined as one who habitually uses redundancy and inference to reduce uncertainty about the texts.



Smith's model has been criticized as there is little research evidence to support the notion that fluent readers identify words faster than inexperienced readers on the basis of their use of the various redundancies. According to West and Stanovich (1978), poor readers are much more likely to use the redundancy strategy while efficient readers are more likely to adopt an automatic "look and say" approach.

In short, top-down models present a set of hypothesis testing procedures. The reading process is conceived as being dominated by higher level conceptual processes rather than analyses of graphic input.

However, both bottom-up and top-down models fail to recognize that comprehension processes occur simultaneously in no pre-specified order and interact with each other as comprehension is not a passive and static process. No single serial stage models can satisfactorily account for the complex reading mechanism. 'Interactive' models (Rumelhart, 1977; Lesgold and Perfetti, 1978) are more acceptable in considering the reading process as a product of joint application of all knowledge source.

In addition, conventional skills approaches fail to consider the importance of what readers bring to the reading task, i.e. background knowledge. Though Coady (1979) has tried to incorporate reader's background knowledge with "conceptual abilities" and "process strategies" in his psycholinguistic model for EFL/ESL reading (Coady, 1979:7) by



suggesting that reader's background knowledge may make up for some of his syntactic deficiencies, still the role of background knowledge in comprehension has been largely neglected or insufficiently emphasized in any psycholinguistic models of reading.

## 2.2 The Schema-theoretic Model in Reading

The assertion of Anderson, Reynold, Schallert and Goetz (1977:369) that "every act of comprehension involves one's knowledge of the world as well" has become the maxim for the formalization of the schema theory (Rumelhart and Ortony, 1977; Rumelhart, 1980), stressing the role of background knowledge in language comprehension.

Schema theory views reading as an interaction between the readers' background knowledge and the reading text. Without prior knowledge, there will be no anchorage for the newly acquired information, and the reading process of prediction, anticipation and hypothesis-testing will be impeded. The text "is not just difficult to interpret: strictly speaking, it is meaningless" (Adam and Bruce, 1980:37; cited in Obah 1983:129).

Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) have given a lucid account on the mechanism of the schema-theoretic model on reading comprehension. "According to schema theory, a text only provides directions for listeners or readers as to how they should retrieve or construct meaning from their own, previously acquired knowledge. This previously acquired knowledge is called the reader's background knowledge, and the previously acquired knowledge structures are called schemata. According to schema theory, comprehending a text is an interactive process between the reader's background knowledge and the text.



Efficient comprehension requires the ability to relate the textual material to one's own knowledge. Comprehending words, sentences, and entire texts involves more than just relying on one's linguistic knowledge. .... The process of interpretation is guided by the principle that every input is mapped against some existing schema and that all aspects of that schema must be compatible with the input information. This principle results in two basic modes of information processing, called bottom-up and top-down processing" (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983:556-7).

Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) also explained the bottom-up processing and top-down processing in terms of schematic structures: "Bottom-up processing is evoked by the incoming data; the features of the data enter the system through the best fitting, bottom-level schemata. Schemata are hierarchically organized, from the most general at the top to the most specific at the bottom. As these bottom-level schemata converge into higher level and more general schemata, these too become activated. Bottom-up processing is, therefore, called data-driven. Top-down processing, on the other hand, occurs as the system makes general predictions based on higher level, general schemata and then searches the input for information to fit into these partially satisfied, higher order schemata. Top-down processing is, therefore, called conceptually-driven" (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983:557). "For the skilled reader, top-down and bottom-up processing are occurring at all levels of analysis simultaneously as she or he proceeds through the text" (Adams,



1980:12). On the interactive nature of the top-down and bottom-up processing in the schema-theoretic model, Carrell and Eisterhold (1983:557) wrote: "The data that are needed to instantiate, or fill out, the schemata become available through bottom-up processing; top-down processing facilitates their assimilation if they are anticipated by or consistent with the reader's conceptual expectations. Bottom-up processing ensures that the readers will be sensitive to information that is novel or that does not fit their ongoing hypotheses about the content or structure of the text; top-down processing helps the readers to resolve ambiguities or to select between alternative possible interpretations of the incoming data."

According to schema theory, meaning does not contain in the text. Rather, a text just provides clues for readers to construct meaning from his existing knowledge. In other words, reading comprehension is "an interactive process between the text and the reader's background knowledge, and input is dealt with in terms of schemata that readers bring with them" (Pearson-Casanave, 1984:334).

Instantiation is the central interactive process of reading comprehension in the schema-theoretic model (Anderson et. al, 1977; Adams, 1980). The abstract schemata contain slots or placeholders for particular instances in a knowledge structure. In comprehending a text, the reader is engaged in the construction of a correspondence between the relevant



schemata and the information from the graphic message. Slots of appropriate schemata are filled with particular instances. The slot-filling ingredients are not only from the message itself but also from inferences based on the reader's prior knowledge stored in schemata (Anderson, Prichert, Goetz, Schallert, Stevens and Trollip, 1976; Dreher and Singer, 1981; Hudson, 1982). Throughout the process of correspondence construction, the message in the text has been and is being comprehended. A schema is instantiated when the slots are filled with enough particular instances and it is only at this moment that the representation in the message makes sense and is consistent.

At least two important functions of schemata in comprehension have been suggested. "First, they provide a framework for classifying concepts presented in a text. Hence, the stronger the framework, the more likely concepts are to be classified and available for subsequent retrieval from long term memory. ... A second function that schemata serve in comprehension is to allow readers to fill in gaps not completely specified in the text" (Pearson et al., 1979:201-202).

With regard to the importance of availability of appropriate schemata in reading comprehension, prior knowledge that readers bring to the text provides important hints on problems that L2 readers may encounter (Anderson and McGaw, 1973; Anderson and Ortony, 1975; Anderson et al., 1977; Frederiksen, 1975). Research studies not only provide insights into the



effects of background knowledge on text processing, but they also indicate how good reading strategies may cause a comprehension breakdown in the process of schemata reconciliation. According to Strange (1980), the underlying cause for comprehension breakdown could be one of the followings: 1) No schema exists; 2) Schema is naive; 3) No new information exists in the text, so details are forgotten; 4) The text has insufficient cues for schema development; 5) Inappropriate schema is used; 6) Schema-based response is not sufficiently related to the text and 7) Text-based response is not sufficiently related to schema. Put in another way, the closer the match between the schema used in writing the text and the reader's schema for interpretation of the text, the better the level of comprehension.

### 2.3 Cultural knowledge in EFL/ESL Reading

Goodman (1970) has provided a framework for understanding background knowledge, which includes a knowledge of "things, place, relationships, concepts, feelings, attitudes which comes with prior experience and learning." On close examination, a large portion of this awareness about people, places, or things is cultural. Obah (1983:130) has elaborated the cultural elements that prior knowledge includes: "a knowledge of one's native language, of the ways of a people, a build-up of knowledge of the history of one's race and its beliefs as passed on in legends, folktales, and formal classroom texts."

As Catford (1965:35) put it: "Meaning ... is a property of a language. An SL text has an SL meaning, and a TL text has a TL meaning..." Second language learning involves the transferring of cultural patterns of L1 to the L2. Failure in such transferring of cultural patterns would arouse feelings of surprise and even of shock. It is this area where misunderstandings and even helplessness in interpretation come about (Trivedi, 1978). Culture is the "ways of a people" (Lado, 1963:110). Ways which are highly commended by people of that culture may be disgusting, repulsive, or even barbaric for other people. This is often the result of a lack of understanding or knowledge of the cultures in contact. Different cultural background can "influence every level of reading from interpretation of one word to interpretation of the



whole passage. ... Cultural knowledge can interfere with comprehension of the author's meaning because it causes non-native speakers to make inferences that are not suggested by the author" (Lebauer, 1985:141). Simple everyday phrases, in a friendly letter, such as 'Dearest so and so', 'Yours ever', 'With love', etc., are likely to be totally misinterpreted and may land those non-native speakers of English in very embarrassing situations.

According to schema theory, various degrees of non-comprehension are attributable to the reader's failure to activate an appropriate schema in the reading process, particularly the cultural schemata. Carrell and Eisterhold (1983:560) observed that "one of the most obvious reasons why a particular content schema may fail to exist for a reader is that the schema is culturally specific and is not part of a particular reader's cultural background." Various studies (Kintsch and Greene, 1978; Steffensen, Joag-dev and Anderson, 1979; Mandler, Scribner, Cole and Marsha, 1980; Johnson, 1981; Barnitz, 1986) have shown that readers' possession of or deficits in cultural knowledge will exert a profound influence on their expectations and prediction strategies in the text processing.

The role of cultural background knowledge in reading comprehension has been documented in various research. Yousef (1968) found that even after an intensive cultural orientation, the negative attitudes of his 120 EFL adult Middle Eastern



students to American culture caused a complete absence of appropriate schemata and a total misinterpretation on Willa Cather's "The Sculptor's Funeral". Gathonton and Tucker (1971) also found that their EFL Filipino high school subjects failed to enjoy or appreciate American short stories as native-speakers did, and that they drew incorrect assumptions on the reading texts or missed the point completely because they read with their native values, attitudes and judgments. Such "cultural filtering" (Gathonton and Tucker, 1971:137) causes problems in understanding implicit presuppositional cultural information.

The cross-cultural study of Steffensen et al. (1979) is a classic example showing the profound influence of cultural schemata on reading comprehension. Asian Indian and American university students were asked to read two syntactically and rhetorically equivalent letters on different marriage customs - one on a traditional Indian wedding, the other on a traditional American wedding. It was found that subjects read faster the passage of their own culture. In the recall tasks, subjects not only recalled more of the content in the culturally familiar text but also provided additional cultural elaborations. While in the recall of the culturally unfamiliar text, frequent cultural distortions and insertion of ideas from their own culture were found. Studies of Andersson and Gipe (1983), and Lipson (1983) on the effects of cross-cultural schemata on reading comprehension also show a strong relationship between



cultural group and performance on their children subjects' inferential reading in geographical, ethnic, and religious aspects.

On investigating the role of background knowledge on ESL reading performance, Johnson (1981) examined the interaction of language complexity and cultural knowledge on the reading comprehension of intermediate/advanced ESL Iranian students and American English-speaking subjects on Iranian and American folktales. She found that the ESL subjects relied primarily not on their linguistic knowledge but on their culturally determined background knowledge in the comprehension of texts of different syntactic complexity. Thus she concluded that "culture origin of the story had more effect on comprehension of the ESL students than the level of syntactic or semantic complexity" (Johnson, 1981:169). Subsequently Johnson's (1982) study on the reading performance of advanced level ESL students on a text containing familiar and unfamiliar information about Halloween revealed that background knowledge was more essential to ESL readers than vocabulary definitions.

More intensively, Carrell (1987) investigated the simultaneous effects of both culture-specific content schemata and formal schemata on ESL reading comprehension. In her study, "religion was considered the defining characteristic of each cultural group" (Carrell, 1987:465). The subjects were 52 high-intermediate level ESL foreign students from Southern



Illinois University of which 28 were of Muslim background and the rest were of Roman Catholic background. In assessing subjects' reading performance, she reported, as expected, that the text with culturally familiar content and familiar rhetorical form yield good reading comprehension results but not for the text with culturally unfamiliar content and unfamiliar rhetorical form. More importantly, echoing Johnson (1981), Carrell's (1987:461) results on the mixed conditions further suggested that "content schemata affected reading comprehension to a greater extent than formal schemata". In her discussion, Carrell firmly asserted that "in the ESL reading classroom, content is of primary importance", and she acknowledged "the important role in ESL reading of background knowledge of text content, especially cultural content" (Carrell, 1987:476).

In agreement with Carrell's (1987) assertion, Nelson (1987) reported similar findings. In ESL readings with matched content, reading level, and length, the 27 Egyptian university graduate students' performance on recall was significantly higher on passages of their own culture about roles of women in Egypt and an Egyptian folktale as compared with similar contents in American context. Egyptian subjects also found humour in the story about a boy buying beans for the morning's breakfast while Americans felt sympathy for the boy. Nevertheless culture did not interfere subjects' recall on the American article on pollution which was the least culture specific and most factual.



Not only do previous studies show that prior culture-specific background knowledge significantly affects reading comprehension, they also provide partial explanation for the reading difficulties of many ESL/EFL readers as "their background experiences reflect a world very different from that portrayed in much of the material, academic or recreational, that they read" (Obah, 1983:130).

Providing culturally relevant background information to help less proficient ESL/EFL readers has long been urged (Carrell, 1983; Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983; Floyd and Carrell, 1987; Nelson, 1987), but so far little is known about the awareness of and the interest in the target language culture in our school children.

## 2.4 Language and Culture

Linguistically loaded second language teaching curricula tend to suggest that "there is a fairly clear distinction between linguistic knowledge and cultural knowledge, and that one can indeed acquire one of these without the other" (Bentahila and Davies, 1989:99). Pedagogically, cultural knowledge is often treated as an optional supplement, as something of a luxury to stimulate students' interest or improve general knowledge, but not as an essential element to successful foreign/second language learning.

Povey (1967) has contended that though language must come first as the basis for a learner to comprehend, his limitation of comprehension will be sharply defined if he fails to draw upon the common pool of cultural knowledge shared among native-speakers. He further argued that the most effective ESL reading material, in the absence of cultural contents, would just be items artificially created "to the specific linguistic architecture of levels of difficulty" (Povey, 1967:43). In this respect, the cultural knowledge of the target language at the later stages of language learning is as equally important as the linguistic knowledge at the initial stages.

On examining the relationship between language learning and culture learning, Croft (1967:47) asserted that "hardly anything in the language-learning situation can be said to be



purely linguistic, divorced completely from the cultural side." Brown (1980:124) also claimed that "culture, as an ingrained set of behaviours and modes of perception, becomes highly important in the learning of a second language. A language is a part of a culture and a culture is a part of a language; the two are intricately interwoven such that one cannot separate the two without losing the significance of either language or culture. The acquisition of a second language, except for specialised, instrumental acquisition, is also the acquisition of a second culture."

Undeniably, the lack of common cultural assumptions in second language learning causes the non-native speakers to flounder. McGroarty and Galvan (1985) have examined the cultural role and influences in language classrooms and reported that numerous questions raised in ESL classes are related to cultural matters such as customs and practices. Povey (1967:44) also observed that "the whole area of cultural comprehension is more likely than language problems to cause difficulty."

Pragmatics defines the goal of language learning and teaching as aiming not merely at linguistic competence but also at sociolinguistic competence. Halliday (1970:141) defined the nature of language as closely related to the functions it has to serve which are culture-specific. For practical purposes, Rivers (1976:2) suggested: "If our students are to function in a



new culture freely and without embarrassing misunderstandings on both sides, they must learn to conform to the 'normal' in that culture, even if it is not their 'natural'. They must be able to use readily and in an unconstrained way the usual and expected forms." As the rules for when certain speech acts can be appropriately performed differ from culture to culture, learners are not only required to acquire a knowledge of how to speak grammatically, but also of how to use the target language according to the rules of speaking in the target socio-cultural settings.

Besides, interactions with native-speakers involve comprehension of cultural habits and expectations. Successful cross-cultural communication entails a great deal more than language skills. Hannerz (1973:238) has clarified that "it is not enough for a person to be able to produce grammatical sentences; one must also know when they are contextually appropriate." Cultural knowledge is "the sort of knowledge people need in order to use the language for communication, rather than merely to produce grammatical strings" (Bentahila and Davies, 1989:100). Mcleod (1980:539) observed that "this is part of what is meant by communicative competence, learning the culturally approved ways to use language."

From what has been discussed so far, it is improper to separate language from culture. Rauf (1988:44) clarified that "a language does not exist in a vacuum. It is embedded in the



culture of a people and reflects the totality of beliefs and sentiments of the speech community." Garcia and Otheguy (1989) have also concurred that "all communication is culture-specific" and "cross-cultural conversations in a common language must be guided by differing cultural norms". Only a mutual cultural understanding can lift the barriers to genuine communication. The question of how much the language learner should also learn about the cultural norms of native speakers of the target language is a delicate one. Though culture-free 'Nuclear English' (Quirk, 1981) has been proposed, no elaboration has been made on this practically "unrealistic" idea of language variety (Bentahila and Davies, 1989). Indeed, can we have a similar control of the degree of cultural difficulty as what we have already had in presenting linguistic items by leading the learners systematically to familiarize the cultural norms related to the target language?

Instead of fostering students' cultural schemata, the current ESL classroom in Hong Kong puts emphasis on the linguistic skills at the expense of enriching learners' cultural experiences. Pierson (1988) has lamented on the uninteresting and inappropriate content of reading materials which serve as a key source of input for second language learning in Hong Kong schools and further criticized the scarcity of cultural relevance in current Hong Kong English textbooks which overemphasizes "the abstract, syntactic and communicative functions of language" (p. 348). At the same time, items on reading comprehension in

school tests and examinations are set to avoid any misinterpretations due to cultural differences. Under such a second language learning environment, students are not only deprived of chances of acquiring cultural knowledge of the target language, but it is also difficult to assess how much our students know about the culture of the target language. Indeed it is a fallacy that mere exposure to the language will automatically lead to some kind of cultural learning (Byram, 1989).



## 2.5 Developmental Studies in Reading

The complex process in the development of reading abilities involves the integration of a repertoire of decoding skills and metacognitive skills (Siegel and Ryan, 1988). Developmental studies in these areas of comprehension process focus mainly on children between grades 1 and 6. Experimental data for school children beyond the concrete operational stages are rare. Furthermore, much of the research in reading has compared the performance of readers in dichotomous terms like 'good' and 'poor', or 'skilled' and 'less skilled'.

The longitudinal study of Juel, Griffith and Gough (1986) has suggested that the literacy development of children starts in first and second grade. The study of Stanovich, Cunningham and West (1981) on first graders also indicated that automatic recognition of words emerges midway through first grade even in less skilled readers. In studying the reading and writing development of 54 children, first to fourth grade, Juel (1988) further found that the poor readers from grade 1 invariably remained as the poor readers by the end of grade 4.

Early stages of reading acquisition reflects a rule-learning process (Gibson and Levin, 1975; Venezky, 1976). Morrison (1984:45) elaborated, "First, the child must master the rules governing symbol-sound correspondences. Second the child must use those rules in learning to decode words and must progressively refine and automate basic word decoding operations.



Third, building on automated decoding skills, the child must acquire a complex set of processing and comprehension skills. ... The severity of the reading disability stems from the fact that the three tasks facing the child learning to read are developmentally linked or dependent on one another." Guttentag and Haith (1978) have observed a developmental lag, maintaining that pseudo-words were not automatically processed through first grade but until third grade by only skilled readers. Guthrie and Seifert (1977) have further noted that children, by third or fourth grade, have acquired basic correspondence rules which allow them to process pseudo-words not previously known.

Problems in initial reading stem from the child's failure in word recognition (Perfetti, 1985). Research has shown that developmental differences exist in word recognition (Mason, 1976; Santa, 1976). Good skilled readers are less dependent on prior context in word recognition tasks as compared with less skilled readers (Perfetti, Goldman and Hogaboam, 1979; Stanovich, 1982a). The study of Samuel, LaBerge and Bremer (1978) has revealed a developmental trend from component to holistic word processing "as one moves from second grade to college level" (p. 719). Lorschach (1982) explained the ability differences in word recognition in terms of speed in categorical decisions, claiming that poor readers are slower than good readers in categorising words. Chabot, Petros and McCord (1983) also reported that the speed of categorical decisions increases with age. Moreover,



the results from Howell and Manis's (1986) study on the developmental and reader ability differences were consistent with the data from Chabot et al. (1983); they explained that "the age difference could be due to maturational changes in the speed of information processing or to the greater reading skill and experience of the older subjects" (p. 128).

Turning to the decoding skills, research has reported evidence that poor readers are weak in decoding unfamiliar words (Golinkoff and Rosinski, 1976; Pace and Golinkoff, 1976) while good readers with their developed automatized decoding skills are competent in this respect (Perfetti and Hogaboam, 1975). Besides poor readers are more likely to process at a word by word level (Wagoner, 1983) and obviously experience problems in developing comprehension skills. Garner and Kraus (1982) have reported that good readers are quite able to identify intrasentential and intersentential inconsistencies while poor readers are unable to identify any of them.

On investigating readers' knowledge of decoding, Forrest and Waller (1980) have found that young and poor readers have little idea on comprehension monitoring and limited knowledge of reading strategies. Good readers can monitor their comprehension processes more effectively as they are syntactically more aware of and sensitive to correct word recognition errors to conform to the syntactic and semantic form of the sentence (Weber, 1970). When good, younger readers are



matched with poor, older readers on decoding ability and reading comprehension, Tunmer, Nesdale and Wright (1987) have found that the poor, older readers performed significantly worse on measures of syntactic awareness and concluded that developmental delay in syntactic awareness may have hindered reading development. Siegel and Ryan's (1988) study has also confirmed that children with reading disability demonstrate syntactic awareness much later than normally achieving children.

Cziko's (1980) study on oral reading of second language readers at elementary, intermediate and advanced levels of language proficiency suggested a developmental pattern in the comprehension monitoring skills and the use of text structures. Junior high native and advanced readers of French as a second language were reported to use bottom-up and top-down processing to interact with the text, while less proficient second language readers used more bottom-up strategies. Other research (Applebee, 1978; Botvin and Sutton-Smith, 1977; Mandler and Johnson, 1977; McClure et al., 1979; Whaley, 1981) have revealed that children's knowledge of story structures becomes richer and more elaborate with age. At the same time, Baker and Anderson (1982) have noted that mature readers, with the acquisition of comprehension monitoring skills, evaluate their comprehension as they read. Nevertheless Brown and DeLoache (1978) have argued that comprehension monitoring skills do not automatically develop with age but depend highly on readers' knowledge and expertise.



Studies of children's ability to generate meaning from narrative texts have conflicting findings. Applebee (1978) has pointed out that children in the concrete operational stages of development are unable to analyze and generate a thematic focus in narratives. However Christie and Schumacher (1975) have showed that elementary age children can generate themes in narrative texts. Lehr (1988) has further demonstrated that kindergarten children generate themes in narratives differently from older children and adults who are more able to make generalization about the stories.

A source of difficulty for poor readers is the inadequate knowledge of story structure (Feagans and Short, 1984; Fitzgerald, 1984; Fitzgerald and Spiegel, 1983; Weaver and Dickinson, 1982; Worden and Nakamura, 1982). Smiley, Oakley, Worthen, Campione and Brown (1977) have found that good readers show higher sensitivity to the importance of idea units than poor readers do. Individual differences in knowledge of story structure can be attributed to the acquisition of story grammars and their application to comprehension and memory skills (Mandler, 1978; Mandler and Johnson, 1977). Furthermore poor readers may have inadequate story schemata or inefficiently apply such schemata in text processing (Paris, Cross and Lipson, 1984; Rahman and Bisanz, 1986). The experiments of Buss, Yussen, Matthews, Miller and Rembold (1983) have provided evidence on the development of children's ability in the use of story schema, claiming that young second graders do not consciously use story



schema in reorganising events in their recalls while older six graders and adults do.

Developmental data have suggested that grade six children have relatively well-developed schemata for simple stories (Buss et al., 1983; Mandler, 1978; Whaley, 1981). On analysis of miscues in text comprehension, Goodman and Goodman (1978), cited in Steffensen (1987), have not only confirmed the importance of readers' schema in text comprehensibility but also claimed that schema development is age-related.

Children, like adults, are able to infer relationships and integrate them in memory (Frederiksen, 1976). On studying the developmental change of first, third and fifth graders in inferential processing of sentences, Paris and Lindauer (1976) have claimed that the inferential ability is age-related. Younger children are able to have inferential operations when guided by tasks while older children seem to employ metamemorial strategies (Paris and Carter, 1973; Paris and Lindauer, 1976; Paris and Mahoney, 1974). Brown, Smiley, Day, Townsend and Lawton (1977) have also noted that young readers seldom render inferences without probing. However Chi (1977) has argued that it is meaningless to say that children are slower in information processing than adults, though it is commonly observed, as they are applying different mental processes.

With respect to the development of metacognitive skills in reading, Garner (1987) has asserted that children's



metacognition about reading develops between the ages of six and twelve. Myers and Paris (1978) have further observed that age-related differences in metacognitive skills may be attributed to the acquisition of efficient memory and reading skills.

In discourse processing, rapid verbal coding allows more processing capacity for the integration of information in working memory (Kintsch and van Dijk, 1978). Comprehension deficits in disabled readers cause large amounts of capacity for semantic processing which tremendously reduce the working memory capacity for comprehension process (Petros, Tabor, Cooney and Chabot, 1983). Various studies have showed that poor readers perform badly on short-term memory task (Cohen and Netley, 1978; Cummings and Faw, 1976; Ritchie and Aten, 1976). In short-term memory tasks, young poor readers are less sensitive to phonemic similarity than normal readers (Byrne and Shea, 1979; Eimas, 1975; Shankweiler, Liberman, Mark, Fowler and Fischer, 1979; Siegel and Linder, 1984). Stanovich (1982b) explained that poor readers' inability to maintain a phonological code in working memory leads to their inferior short-term memory performance while good readers make more deliberate use of memorization strategies.

In general, skilled readers have positive orientation about reading (Paris, Lipson and Wixson, 1983) and they know more about reading strategies (Paris and Jacobs, 1984) than younger children who know relatively less about the skills and habits of

good readers (Hiebert, 1981; Johns, 1980; Myers and Paris, 1978).



## Chapter 3

## THE HYPOTHESES

In view of what have been reviewed in the related literature in reading, there have not been many significant studies on cultural schemata in reading comprehension with a developmental perspective. The present study intends to broaden the scope of inquiry in the field of applied linguistics, which "has generally ignored both cultural process and content in its studies of second language phenomena" (Saville-Troike, 1985:51).

Parallel to the research questions (cf. 1.2) are the following null hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the overall performance on native culture among children of different age groups.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean score of any specific cultural elements on native culture among children of different age groups.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the overall performance on foreign culture among children of different age groups.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in the mean score of any specific cultural elements on foreign culture among children of different age groups.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant difference in the overall performance between native culture and foreign culture among children of the same age groups.

Hypothesis 6: There is no significant difference in the mean score in any specific cultural elements between native culture and foreign culture among children of the same age groups.



## Chapter 4

### DESIGN OF THE STUDY

#### 4.1 Design Characteristics

The present design characterizes itself with several specific features. First, this study investigates, and hopes to confirm, the role of cultural schemata in ESL/EFL reading comprehension. Specifically, this study seeks to understand the relationship between Anglo-American cultural knowledge and ESL/EFL comprehension in Chinese learners. The role of cultural schemata in reading comprehension will be cross-validated by the performance of the English native-speakers in reading texts loaded with specific Chinese cultural contents and by the performance of all subjects in reading texts with common cultural contexts.

Second, unlike previous studies using one or two lengthy passages focusing on one cultural aspect such as religion or folklores (Steffensen et al., 1979; Johnson, 1981; Carrell, 1987), the present research uses 30 short texts and 1 long one, all culturally-loaded with specific elements (Appendix 1) to study the importance of specific cultural schemata in the comprehension of the texts. Subjects would be expected to perform better if they possess the required cultural schemata.

Third, a cross-sectional design is adopted to study the developmental relationship between cultural schemata and ESL/EFL

reading comprehension.

Fourth, the Reading Test designed for this study attempts to measure independently the cultural schemata possessed by the readers of different age groups. It is, of course, problematic to separate culture from language as they are intricately interwoven. Writing the test items in simple language structures seems a way to approach the problem. Thus the linguistic level of the Test is kept at elementary level.



#### 4.2 Instrumentation

Elements in the Anglo-American culture, the Chinese culture, and those existing in both cultures were used in the testing texts. Though Valette (1988) has defined the framework for a culture test, only the anthropologically conceived cultural aspects were used as contents in the test construction of the present study (cf. "Culture" in Section 1.4). The testing areas include tradition and customs, attitudes and values, and beliefs. These cultural elements are more daily-life related, since readers, particularly the less proficient ones, may not have the lexical knowledge for the expression of other cultural elements such as geography; history; and achievements in sciences, social sciences and arts.

In order to eliminate misunderstandings in wording and the effect of 'formal schemata' in reading comprehension, care was taken to construct the reading texts in simple language structures so as to avoid misinterpretations because of linguistic difficulties. Some lexical items were accompanied with Chinese glosses so as to ensure that less proficient readers understand every word in the texts. Prior cultural knowledge was assessed by how much each subject knew about the elements of a specific culture in responses to the inferential questions rather than by eliciting free recall. No implanting of schematic information in the reader's mind was done prior to the reading test.

In this study, the presence of cultural schemata in reading comprehension for subjects of different age groups was evaluated by means of the scores obtained on the inferential questions in the Reading Test. Subjects were required to match information from various parts of the Reading Test as presented in Table 1 with their existing cultural schemata for making inferences and drawing conclusions that were not specified in the reading texts.

TABLE 1  
Distribution of Test Items for Pilot Study

Part A (30 Short Passages)

	Questions
Tradition and Customs	
British culture	1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 10, 12
Chinese culture	2, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11, 13, 14
Attitudes and Values	
British culture	15, 17, 18, 21
Chinese culture	16, 19, 20, 22
Beliefs	
British culture	24, 27, 28, 30
Chinese culture	23, 25, 26, 29

Part B (1 Long Passage)

Tradition and Customs	
American culture	31, 32
Attitudes and Values	
American culture	33, 34

For marking convenience, comprehension questions were set in objective multiple choice format with a separate answer sheet. Five options were given to reduce the probability of guessing. It was anticipated that only insiders to the culture would give



the culturally appropriate answer. Distractors for each question were, as far as possible, constructed to examine the probability of any transference of schemata from native culture.

Two questions on the subject's perception on the amount of contacts with the Anglo-American culture and the Chinese culture were asked after the comprehension questions so as to provide a measure for the validity of the Test.

### 4.3 The Pilot Study

In view of the exploratory nature of the present research, a pilot study was conducted in order to refine the testing items in the Reading Test and to estimate the time allowed for the completion of the Test. To have a uniform administration of the data collection session, the Test Administration Procedures (Appendix 2) and a Record Form (Appendix 3) were provided for the participating schools.

#### 4.3.1 Subjects

A total of 123 Chinese students of Secondary 1, 3 and 5 with an average academic performance from SKH Tsang Shiu Tim Secondary School (TST), a suburban estate school in Shatin, were recruited. At the same time, a total of 94 English-speaking students of Secondary 1, 3 and 5 with an average academic performance from Island School (IS), a school in the English Schools Foundation on Hong Kong Island, were also chosen as the testing group.

TABLE 2  
Sample Size in Pilot Study

Class	TST	IS
Secondary 1	40	10
3	41	29
5	42	15



#### 4.3.2 Results

A total of 24 answer sheets from Island School were discarded as some subjects were from Asian countries where English was not their first language and some responses were invalid. Tables 3 and 4 present the background of subjects from SKH Tsang Shiu Tim Secondary School and Island School respectively.

TABLE 3  
Background of Subjects from TST School

	S1	S3	S5
Nationality: Chinese	40	41	42
Average Age (yr.)	12.5	14.7	16.7
Average Length of Stay in H.K. (yr.)	12.3	14.4	16.2

TABLE 4  
Background of Subjects from Island School

	S1	S3	S5
Nationality: British	9	10	11
Scottish			2
Irish	1		1
Indian	4	3	6
Australian	3	1	1
New Zealander	5	1	3
Canadian		1	4
American	1	3	
Total:	23	19	28
Average Age (yr.)	11.4	13.3	15.6
Average Length of Stay in H.K. (yr.)	6.7	9.3	9.4

The mean scores of S1, S3 and S5 in different cultures (cf. Table 1) are presented in Table 5. A gradual increase in mean scores across different cultures from S1 to S5 in both target schools was apparent, suggesting a developmental trend of cultural schemata in both native and foreign cultures.

TABLE 5  
Mean Scores in Different Cultures

			S1	S3	S5
British Culture (15)	TST	n	40	41	42
		M	5.05	6.24	7.07
		SD	2.01	2.11	1.35
	IS	n	23	19	28
		M	8.17	8.42	9.04
		SD	2.15	1.98	2.27
American Culture (4)	TST	n	40	41	42
		M	1.73	2.59	2.69
		SD	1.01	1.05	1.05
	IS	n	23	19	28
		M	2.70	3.42	3.46
		SD	1.15	0.96	0.64
Chinese Culture (16)	TST	n	40	41	42
		M	11.15	12.10	13.24
		SD	1.56	1.34	1.10
	IS	n	23	19	28
		M	4.17	5.47	6.51
		SD	1.67	2.22	2.42

At the same time, the differences between the mean scores of each form in different cultures between TST and IS were statistically tested as shown by the results of t-tests in Table 6.



TABLE 6  
Results of t-tests Between Forms in Different Cultures

		TST (M)	IS (M)	df	t	Sig. Level (2-tailed)
British Culture	S1	5.05	8.17	61	5.689	p < 0.001
	S3	6.24	8.42	58	3.731	p < 0.001
	S5	7.07	9.04	68	3.923	p < 0.001
American Culture	S1	1.73	2.70	61	3.431	p < 0.01
	S3	2.59	3.42	58	0.910	n.s.
	S5	2.69	3.46	68	3.424	p < 0.01
Chinese Culture	S1	11.15	4.17	61	16.394	p < 0.001
	S3	12.10	5.47	58	16.910	p < 0.001
	S5	13.24	6.61	68	20.580	p < 0.001

Significant differences were found between subjects of the same form in the acquisition of the same culture. English-speaking subjects tend to have more cultural schemata in British and American cultures while Chinese subjects seem to have more cultural schemata in Chinese culture.

#### 4.3.3 Amendments

After item analysis (cf. Appendix 1), Items 3, 5 and 17 for the British culture, Items 6, 11 and 23 for the Chinese culture, and Item 31 for the American culture were deleted either because of their low percentage of correct responses or because of their low level of difficulty. Item 9 was re-grouped under the British culture. A new item on belief was added to British culture. The distribution of items in the final instrument for the main study (Appendix 4) is presented in Table

7. The two questions in the answer sheet on self-contact with Anglo-American and Chinese cultures remained unchanged.

TABLE 7  
Distribution of Test Items for Main Study

<u>Part A</u> (26 Short Passages)		Items
Tradition and Customs		
British culture		1, 4, 6, 7, 9
Chinese culture		2, 3, 5, 8, 10
Attitudes and Values		
British culture		12, 14, 16
Chinese culture		11, 13, 15
Beliefs		
British culture		18, 20, 22, 23, 25
Chinese culture		17, 19, 21, 24, 26
<u>Part B</u> (1 Long Passage)		
American culture		27, 28, 29

As the English-speaking subjects in the Island School (IS) showed better performance in British and American cultures than Chinese subjects in TST, items for British and American cultures were grouped under Anglo-American culture in the main study for analyses.

At the same time, it would be desirable to have pure British subjects in order to minimize the cultural interferences from other nationalities. The effect from the length of stay of British subjects in the main study would also be controlled, as longer stay in Hong Kong could mean more exposure to Chinese



culture. Besides, the over age students in Chinese secondary forms would be discarded to provide a comparable average age with their counterparts.

Furthermore, the time for completion of the Reading Test in the main study was set to be 30 minutes. The number of options for each testing item was reduced from 5 to 4 and a final polishing of all testing items had been done before the main study was conducted.

#### 4.4 The Main Study

After a thorough revision of the testing instrument, the main study was conducted with the co-operation and assistance of the school principals and English panel heads of the participating schools.

##### 4.4.1 Subjects

A total of 230 Chinese students with average academic performance from Secondary 1, 3 and 5 of two suburban estate Anglo-Chinese co-educational schools in Shatin, namely Lau Pak Lok Secondary School (LPL) and Kwok Tak Seng Catholic Secondary School (KTS), were tested. A vast majority of the testees lived in nearby public housing estates. 192 English-speaking students with average academic performance from Secondary 1, 3 and 5 of two schools in the English Schools Foundation, namely King George V School (KGV) in Homantin and St. George's School (SGS) in Kowloon Tong, were also tested.

A stratified random sample of 210 subjects were chosen from the four participating schools with a total of 105 Chinese subjects from the estate schools and an equal number of pure British subjects from the two schools in the English Schools Foundation. The sample consists of 35 subjects from each form selecting from two schools (Table 8) with control over the intervening variables such as academic level, sex, age, length of



stay in Hong Kong (for the British subjects) and the intra-group socio-economic background.

TABLE 8  
Particulars of The Stratified Random Sample

Form	School	Sex		n	Average Age (yr.)	Average Length of Stay (yr.)
		M	F			
S1	LPL	9	9	18	12.2	12.2
	KTS	9	8	17		
	KGV	4	3	7	11.8	2.3
	SGS	15	13	28		
S3	LPL	9	9	18	14.5	14.5
	KTS	8	9	17		
	KGV	4	4	8	13.6	2.3
	SGS	13	14	27		
S5	LPL	9	9	18	16.3	15.6
	KTS	9	8	17		
	KGV	2	2	4	16.0	2.8
	SGS	19	12	31		

#### 4.4.2 Procedure

All subjects were required to complete the whole set of the Reading Test in 30 minutes. The testing sessions of different forms in the same school were arranged within the same day. The version with Chinese glosses on some lexical terms (cf. Appendices 4a and 4b) was given to Chinese subjects only. The monitoring of the testing procedures was standardized in all

four schools by means of the Test Administration Procedure and the Record Form (Appendices 2 and 3) provided for the staff concerned.

#### 4.4.3 Data Analysis

The design was a 2 x 3 factorial with status (British vs. Chinese) and forms (S1 vs. S3 vs. S5) as independent variables. The dependent variable was the score in the Reading Test.

Two two-way ANOVAs were run, one for the Anglo-American culture with British subjects as control and the other for the Chinese culture with Chinese subjects as control. To locate specific differences in group means, one-way ANOVA and Tukey's HSD tests were used as post hoc comparisons with statistical significance of the latter set at the 0.05 level.

All statistical data were calculated in the Computer Service Centre of the Chinese University of Hong Kong, utilizing the SPSS-X Release 3.0 for IBM 4381 OS/MVS, with the technical assistance of two student-helpers.



#### 4.5 Delimitations of the Study

The scope of this study was confined to investigating the availability of cultural schemata in reading comprehension of a stratified sample of three different forms of school children coming from two different cultural background in four schools. The following delimitations were applicable to this developmental study:

1. Pure British subjects with short length of stay in Hong Kong were difficult to find, particularly in higher forms. Those who were born in Hong Kong were considerably deprived of cultural experiences in their native culture. As the Principal of Island School commented, 'The Reading Test is somewhat like a history test for our students. ... Some British have already forgotten their own culture.'

2. The class size in English schools was smaller than that in Anglo-Chinese schools. Random sampling was limited to 35 British children in each form.

3. There was a considerable age difference between British and Chinese school children in all forms. Normally Chinese school children were one year older than their British counterparts. Discarding the over-aged Chinese school children narrowed the choice in random sampling.

4. As the study was the first of its kind, no previous

testing instrument with reliability and validity figures were available. The test reliability was only estimated from an examination of its internal consistency, the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient. With a total of 13 items on Chinese culture and 16 items on Anglo-American culture, it is difficult to achieve acceptable reliability for the Reading Test (Appendix 5).

5. The construct validity was estimated from Pearson Correlation Coefficients,  $r$ , relating the test performance of the two cultures to subjects' self-perceptions on contacts with the corresponding cultures, which might not be reliable (Appendix 6).

6. Basically the Reading Test is a criterion-referenced test with clusters of items on cultural elements comparing all subjects with predetermined criteria. However, the item construction was limited to tradition and customs, attitudes and values, and beliefs only.

7. Furthermore, not more than 5 testing items were constructed for each cultural element, since texts with distinct cultural characteristics were difficult to construct within the subjects' reading ability; and items with common cultural contexts were even more difficult to construct.



## Chapter 5

## RESULTS

5.1 Descriptive Data

The means and the standard deviations of the Reading Test scores for the British and the Chinese subjects in different cultural elements are summarised in Table 9.

TABLE 9  
Mean Scores in the Reading Test

Status & Form			B1	B3	B5	C1	C3	C5
n			35	35	35	35	35	35
British Culture	Tradition & Customs	M	3.86	4.37	4.29	1.40	1.71	2.00
		SD	0.81	0.69	0.79	0.95	0.93	0.84
	Attitudes & Values	M	2.11	2.31	2.37	0.80	1.06	1.60
		SD	0.80	0.68	0.60	0.76	0.76	0.91
	Beliefs	M	2.89	3.46	3.54	1.49	1.71	2.06
		SD	1.02	1.12	0.82	0.89	1.03	1.13
	Total	M	8.86	10.14	10.20	3.69	4.49	5.66
		SD	1.77	1.44	1.32	1.64	1.42	1.68
American Culture	Total	M	1.71	2.14	2.37	0.74	0.80	1.11
		SD	0.96	0.88	0.84	0.78	0.72	0.90
Anglo-American Culture	Grand Total	M	10.57	12.29	12.57	4.43	5.29	6.77
		SD	2.24	1.72	1.56	1.93	1.53	1.88
Chinese Culture	Tradition & Customs	M	1.31	1.29	1.37	2.63	3.66	4.46
		SD	0.68	1.02	1.14	1.26	1.28	0.66
	Attitudes & Values	M	0.77	0.89	1.00	1.54	1.83	2.66
		SD	0.69	0.68	0.91	0.92	1.01	0.54
	Beliefs	M	2.29	2.23	2.06	2.71	3.00	4.49
		SD	1.02	0.94	0.64	1.41	1.51	0.78
	Total	M	4.37	4.40	4.43	6.89	8.49	11.60
		SD	1.37	1.74	1.46	2.76	3.04	1.40

B1, B3, B5 - British subjects, Secondary 1, 3 and 5.  
C1, C3, C5 - Chinese subjects, Secondary 1, 3 and 5.

From the group means, it is apparent that subjects in higher forms generally scored better than those in lower forms, irrespective of the culture types. When scores in native culture and foreign culture were compared, clear differences existed revealing that subjects scored better in native culture.



## 5.2 Overall Performances in Different Cultures

Two-way analyses of variance (ANOVAs) were conducted to determine whether the score differences in different cultures were statistically significant in the two main conditions, i.e. forms (S1 vs S3 vs S5) and status (British vs Chinese). Significant differences were yielded in forms and status for all culture types.

TABLE 10

Result of 2-way ANOVA for Scores in British Culture  
related to Form and Status

Type	Source	SS	d.f.	MS	F	p
British Culture	Main Effects	1476.562	3	492.187	203.936	0.000
	Form	98.257	2	49.129	20.356	0.000
	Status	1378.305	1	1378.305	571.094	0.000
	Form x Status	10.924	2	5.462	2.263	0.107
	Within Groups	492.343	204	2.413		
	Total	1979.829	209			

For the British culture, highly significant main effects were found,  $F(3, 204) = 203.936$ ,  $MSe = 2.413$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; form,  $F(2, 204) = 20.356$ ,  $MSe = 2.413$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; and status,  $F(1, 204) = 571.094$ ,  $MSe = 2.413$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The two-way interaction effects were insignificant,  $F(2, 204) = 2.263$ ,  $MSe = 2.413$ ,  $p > 0.1$ .

TABLE 11

Result of 2-way ANOVA for Scores in American Culture  
related to Form and Status

Type	Source	SS	d.f.	MS	F	p
American Culture	Main Effects	83.671	3	27.890	38.593	0.000
	Form	9.267	2	4.633	6.411	0.002
	Status	74.405	1	74.405	102.955	0.000
	Form x Status	1.324	2	0.662	0.916	0.402
	Within Groups	147.429	204	0.723		
	Total	232.424	209			

For the American culture, the main effects were also highly significant,  $F(3, 204) = 38.593$ ,  $MSe = 0.723$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; form,  $F(2, 204) = 6.411$ ,  $MSe = 0.723$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ; and status,  $F(1, 204) = 102.955$ ,  $MSe = 0.723$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . There was no significant two-way interaction effects,  $F(2, 204) = 0.916$ ,  $MSe = 0.723$ ,  $p > 0.4$ .

TABLE 12

Result of 2-way ANOVA for Scores in Anglo-American Culture  
related to Form and Status

Type	Source	SS	d.f.	MS	F	p
Anglo- American Culture	Main Effects	2260.081	3	753.360	225.951	0.000
	Form	166.895	2	83.448	25.028	0.000
	Status	2093.186	1	2093.186	627.797	0.000
	Form x Status	13.371	2	6.686	2.005	0.137
	Within Groups	680.171	204	3.334		
	Total	2953.624	209			



Considering the results of two-way ANOVA on the Anglo-American culture, a grouping of British culture and American culture, the main effects were again highly significant,  $F(3, 204) = 225.951$ ,  $MSe = 3.334$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; form,  $F(2, 204) = 25.028$ ,  $MSe = 3.334$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; and status,  $F(1, 204) = 627.797$ ,  $MSe = 3.334$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . The two-way interaction effects were found insignificant,  $F(2, 204) = 2.005$ ,  $MSe = 3.334$ ,  $p > 0.1$ .

TABLE 13

Result of 2-way ANOVA for Scores in Chinese Culture  
related to Form and Status

Type	Source	SS	d.f.	MS	F	p
Chinese Culture	Main Effects	1312.200	3	437.400	101.417	0.000
	Form	205.895	2	102.948	23.870	0.000
	Status	1106.305	1	1106.305	256.512	0.000
	Form x Status	196.467	2	98.233	22.777	0.000
	Within Groups	879.829	204	4.313		
	Total	2388.495	209			

For the Chinese culture, the main effects were found highly significant too,  $F(3, 204) = 101.417$ ,  $MSe = 4.313$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; form,  $F(2, 204) = 23.87$ ,  $MSe = 4.313$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ; and status,  $F(1, 204) = 256.512$ ,  $MSe = 4.313$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . In addition, the two-way interaction effects were found highly significant,  $F(2, 204) = 22.777$ ,  $MSe = 4.313$ ,  $p < 0.001$ . Follow-up one-way ANOVAs revealed that the score differences

among forms (S1 vs S3 vs S5) for the British subjects in the Chinese culture as shown in Table 14 was highly insignificant,  $F(2, 102) = 0.012, p > 0.98$ .

TABLE 14

Results of 1-way ANOVA of Score in Chinese Culture  
by Form and Status

Conditions	Source	d.f.	SS	MS	F	p
<u>By Form</u>						
British	Between Groups	2	0.057	0.029	0.012	0.988
	Within Groups	102	239.143	2.345		
	Total	104	239.200			
Chinese	Between Groups	2	402.305	201.152	32.024	0.000
	Within Groups	102	640.686	6.281		
	Total	104	1042.991			
<u>By Status</u>						
S1	Between Groups	1	110.629	110.629	23.239	0.000
	Within Groups	68	323.714	4.761		
	Total	69	434.343			
S3	Between Groups	1	292.129	292.129	47.621	0.000
	Within Groups	68	417.143	6.135		
	Total	69	709.271			
S5	Between Groups	1	900.014	900.014	440.385	0.000
	Within Groups	68	138.971	2.044		
	Total	69	1038.986			

A diagrammatic presentation of the scores among different form levels was shown in Figures 1 to 4. Only Figure 1 indicated that there was virtually no difference among the scores in Chinese culture British subjects made in all three forms. Other figures revealed developmental trends among British and Chinese subjects in different cultures.



Profile of Mean Scores in Different Cultures

Figure 1: Chinese Culture

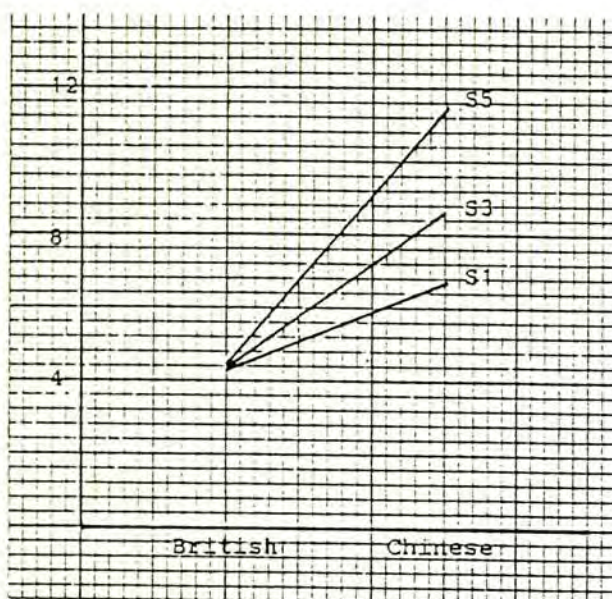


Figure 2: British Culture

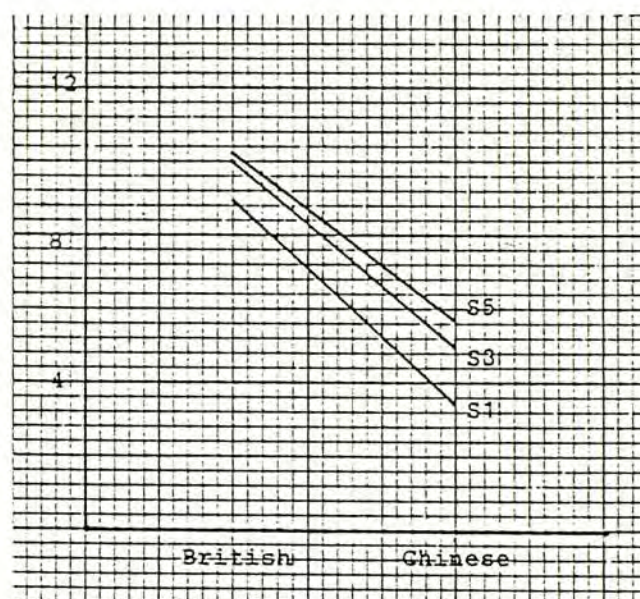


Figure 3: American Culture

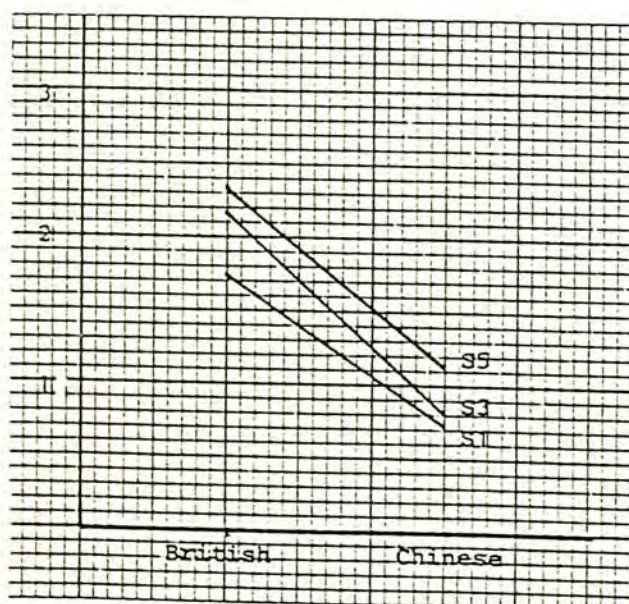
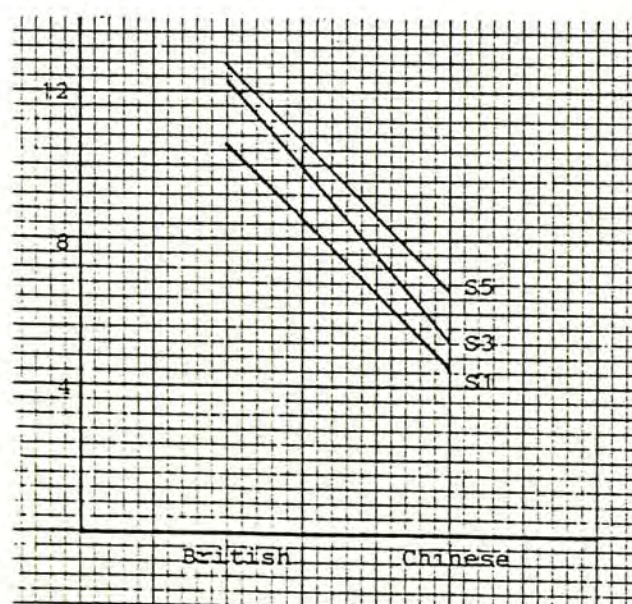


Figure 4: Anglo-American Culture



### 5.3 Comparison of Different Group Performances

Further investigation of mean scores in different cultures and cultural elements, using Tukey's HSD procedures at 0.05 level of significance, revealed significant differences between children of same form and of different forms in native culture and foreign culture. The results are presented in the Tables 15, 16 and 17.



TABLE 15

Results of Tukey's HSD Procedure for Between-Group Difference  
on Total Mean Scores in Different Cultures

Types	Groups	Means	Mean Differences				
			M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
British Culture	B1	M1 = 8.86	1.28*	1.34*	5.17*	4.37*	3.20*
	B3	M2 = 10.14		0.06	6.45*	5.65*	4.48*
	B5	M3 = 10.20			6.51*	5.71*	4.54*
	C1	M4 = 3.69				0.80	1.97*
	C3	M5 = 4.49					1.17*
	C5	M6 = 5.66					
Anglo-American Culture	B1	M1 = 10.57	1.72*	2.00*	6.14*	5.28*	3.80*
	B3	M2 = 12.29		0.28	7.86*	7.00*	5.52*
	B5	M3 = 12.57			8.14*	7.28*	5.80*
	C1	M4 = 4.43				0.86	2.34*
	C3	M5 = 5.29					1.48*
	C5	M6 = 6.77					
Chinese Culture	B1	M1 = 4.37	0.03	0.06	2.52*	4.12*	7.23*
	B3	M2 = 4.40		0.03	2.49*	4.09*	7.20*
	B5	M3 = 4.43			2.46*	4.06*	7.17*
	C1	M4 = 6.89				1.60*	4.71*
	C3	M5 = 8.49					3.11*
	C5	M6 = 11.60					

\*  $p < 0.05$

As indicated in Table 15, there was no significant difference in the total mean scores of British culture between B3 ( $M = 10.14$ ) and B5 ( $M = 10.20$ ). There was also no significant difference between C1 ( $M = 3.69$ ) and C3 ( $M = 4.49$ ) in British culture. However differences in total mean scores of British culture between other groups were found significant. Similar pattern of significance in mean differences was found in Anglo-American culture. In Chinese culture, no significant difference was found between the three British groups while mean differences between all other groups were found significant.

TABLE 16

Results of Tukey's HSD Procedure for Between-Group Differences  
in Different Anglo-American Cultural Elements

Types	Elements	Groups	Means	Mean Differences				
				M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
British Culture	Tradition & Customs	B1	M1 = 3.86	0.51	0.43	2.46*	2.15*	1.86*
		B3	M2 = 4.37		0.08	2.97*	2.66*	2.37*
		B5	M3 = 4.29			2.89*	2.58*	2.29*
		C1	M4 = 1.40				0.31	0.60*
		C3	M5 = 1.71					0.29
		C5	M6 = 2.00					
	Attitude & Values	B1	M1 = 2.11	0.20	0.26	1.31*	1.05*	0.51
		B3	M2 = 2.31		0.06	1.51*	1.25*	0.71*
		B5	M3 = 2.37			1.57*	1.31*	0.77*
		C1	M4 = 0.80				0.24	0.80*
		C3	M5 = 1.06					0.54*
		C5	M6 = 1.60					
	Beliefs	B1	M1 = 2.89	0.57	0.65	1.40*	1.18*	0.83*
		B3	M2 = 3.46		0.08	1.97*	1.75*	1.40*
		B5	M3 = 3.54			2.05*	1.83*	1.48*
		C1	M4 = 1.49				0.22	0.57
		C3	M5 = 1.71					0.35
		C5	M6 = 2.06					
American Culture		B1	M1 = 1.71	0.43	0.66*	0.97*	0.91*	0.60*
		B3	M2 = 2.14		0.23	1.40*	1.34*	1.03*
		B5	M3 = 2.37			1.63*	1.57*	1.26*
		C1	M4 = 0.74				0.06	0.37
		C3	M5 = 0.80					0.31
		C5	M6 = 1.11					

\*  $p < 0.05$

In Table 16, the Tukey's HSD procedure on mean scores in different Anglo-American cultural elements revealed the slots where there were significant differences. From the between-group differences of group means in cultural elements of Anglo-American culture, the B1, B3 and B5 groups did not have significant differences in all three British cultural elements and a significant difference was found only between B1 ( $M = 1.71$ ) and B5 ( $M = 2.37$ ) in American culture. But for Chinese



subjects, in British culture, significant differences were found only between C1 (M = 1.40) and C5 (M = 2.00) in tradition and customs, C1 (M = 0.80) and C5 (M = 1.60) as well as C3 (M = 1.06) and C5 (M = 1.60) in attitude and values. Furthermore, there was no significant differences between all Chinese groups in American culture. However group differences between B1 and C1, B3 and C3, and B5 and C5 in all cultural elements in Anglo-American culture were found significant.

TABLE 17

Results of Tukey's HSD Procedure for Between-Group Differences  
in Different Chinese Cultural Elements

Type	Elements	Groups	Means	Mean Differences				
				M2	M3	M4	M5	M6
Chinese Culture	Tradition & Customs	B1	M1 = 1.31	0.02	0.06	1.32*	2.35*	3.15*
		B3	M2 = 1.29		0.08	1.34*	2.37*	3.17*
		B5	M3 = 1.37			1.26*	2.29*	3.09*
		C1	M4 = 2.63				1.03*	1.83*
		C3	M5 = 3.66					0.80*
		C5	M6 = 4.46					
	Attitude & Values	B1	M1 = 0.77	0.11	0.23	0.77*	1.06*	1.89*
		B3	M2 = 0.88		0.12	0.66*	0.95*	1.78*
		B5	M3 = 1.00			0.54	0.83*	1.66*
		C1	M4 = 1.54				0.29	1.12*
		C3	M5 = 1.83					0.83
		C5	M6 = 2.66					
	Beliefs	B1	M1 = 2.29	0.06	0.23	0.42	0.71	2.20*
		B3	M2 = 2.23		0.17	0.48	0.77*	2.26*
		B5	M3 = 2.06			0.65	0.94*	2.43*
		C1	M4 = 2.71				0.29	1.78*
		C3	M5 = 3.00					1.49*
		C5	M6 = 4.49					

\* p < 0.05

Table 17 showed the between-group mean differences in

Chinese cultural elements. The mean differences among B1, B3 and B5 groups in all three cultural elements were insignificant. For Chinese subjects, only the differences between C1 ( $M = 1.54$ ) and C3 ( $M = 1.83$ ), C3 ( $M = 1.83$ ) and C5 ( $M = 2.66$ ) in attitude and values; and C1 ( $M = 2.71$ ) and C3 ( $M = 3.00$ ) in beliefs were found insignificant while the differences between other groups in different Chinese cultural elements were all found significant.

On comparing group means of subjects of the same forms, significant differences were found between B1 and C1, B3 and C3, and B5 and C5 in tradition and customs, and attitude and values. But in beliefs, only the differences between B3 and C3, and B5 and C5 were found significant and there was no significant difference between B1 ( $M = 2.29$ ) and C1 ( $M = 2.71$ ).



## Chapter 6

### DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

#### 6.1 Introduction

The findings of this study not only re-confirm the results of previous studies (Kintsch and Greene, 1978; Steffensen et al., 1979; Mandler et al., 1980; Johnson, 1981; Lipson, 1983; Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983; Barnitz, 1986) claiming the vital role of cultural schemata in EFL/ESL reading comprehension, but also indicate that the availability of cultural schemata is developmental.

This chapter presents a discussion of the statistical results and the conclusions reached with regard to each hypothesis in this study. Pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research are offered.

## 6.2 Discussion

The subjects' scores in different cultures and cultural elements in the Reading Test vividly substantiated the importance of cultural schemata in reading comprehension as concluded in previous studies. It was clear from Table 9 that native speakers, who presumably possessed the cultural schemata of their own culture, scored higher than non-native speakers. British subjects of different age groups (B1, B3, and B5), for example, outperformed their Chinese counterparts in British culture, American culture or the combined Anglo-American culture, while Chinese subjects of different age groups (C1, C3, and C5) also outperformed their British counterparts in Chinese culture.

Let us recapitulate the six hypotheses stated in Chapter 3.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference in the overall performance on native culture among children of different age groups.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in the mean score of any specific cultural elements on native culture among children of different age groups.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference in the overall performance on foreign culture among children of different age groups.



Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference in the mean score of any specific cultural elements on foreign culture among children of different age groups.

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant difference in the overall performance between native culture and foreign culture among children of the same age groups.

Hypothesis 6: There is no significant difference in the mean score of any specific cultural elements between native culture and foreign culture among children of the same age groups.

Results in Table 15 showed the significant mean difference between B1 and B3 (1.28), B1 and B5 (1.34) in British culture and the significant mean difference between B1 and B3 (1.72), B1 and B5 (2.00) in the combined Anglo-American culture, indicating that older British children possessed more native cultural schemata. No significant mean difference was shown between B3 and B5 (0.06) possibly because the testing items did not provide a higher ceiling which could differentiate the groups of older students. As for Chinese subjects, such developmental trend was more obvious as there were significant mean differences between C1 and C3 (1.60), C1 and C5 (4.71), C3 and C5 (3.11) in Chinese culture. In this respect, Hypothesis 1 stating that there is no significant difference in the overall performance on native culture among children of different age groups was



rejected.

As to the mean score of specific cultural elements in native culture, no significant mean difference was revealed (Table 16) among British children of different age groups (B1, B3 and B5) in tradition and customs, attitude and values, and beliefs in British culture. What were tested in items on these cultural elements might just be common sense to them. All British subjects seemed to have some basic cultural schemata on their native culture irrespective of their ages and being in Hong Kong. On the contrary, significant mean differences were shown (Table 17) among Chinese subjects in tradition and customs of Chinese culture indicating that older Chinese children had better schemata of this cultural element. Significant mean differences were also found in attitude and values between C1 and C5 (1.12), and in beliefs between C1 and C5 (1.78), C3 and C5 (1.49). There was no significant differences between C1 and C3 in the availability of cultural schemata in these two specific cultural elements possibly because younger Chinese subjects are more susceptible to the impact of western cultures which certainly have considerable effects on their attitudes, value system as well as traditional Chinese beliefs. Based on the results of this study, Hypothesis 2 stating that there is no significant difference in the mean score of any specific cultural elements on native culture among children of different age groups was upheld for British subjects, but was rejected for Chinese counterparts as a developmental trend could be traced among



Chinese subjects in different Chinese cultural elements.

For British subjects, the mean differences between different age groups (B1, B3 and B5) in Chinese culture was insignificant as shown in Tables 14 and 15. Figure 1 (p. 63) delineates the insignificant difference in mean scores of Chinese culture attained by British subjects in different age groups. Such insignificance merely reflects the close language community and the 'social distance' of the British subjects who stay here without much contact with Chinese culture. For them, there is relatively little need to learn another language. For Chinese subjects, the mean differences in British culture and Anglo-American culture between C1 and C5 (1.97 and 2.34), C3 and C5 (1.17 and 1.48) were significant as shown in Table 15. No significant difference was found between C1 and C3 in foreign cultures; this may be due to the fact that, though English is regarded as a second language in Hong Kong, Chinese language is more predominant in junior classes and English is only taught more intensively in senior forms in many Anglo-Chinese schools. On the other hand, it may be that the low English proficiency of the Chinese subjects in the junior forms could be a detrimental factor affecting their scores. Thus, Hypothesis 3 stating that there is no significant difference in the overall performance on foreign culture among children of different age groups was upheld for British subjects, but was partially rejected for Chinese counterparts.



Turning to the foreign cultural elements, Table 17 shows that there was no significant mean difference among British subjects of different age groups in all three Chinese cultural elements. For Chinese subjects, as shown in Table 16, significant mean differences in the British cultural elements were only found between C1 and C5 (0.60) in tradition and customs; between C1 and C5 (0.80), and between C3 and C5 (0.54) in attitude and values, indicating that older Chinese subjects had better cultural schemata in these two cultural elements. There was no significant mean differences among Chinese subjects of different age groups in beliefs of British culture, possibly because knowledge on such aspect is not readily available in English textbooks and beliefs in a foreign culture are not easily observable as compared with tradition and customs or attitude and values. Hypothesis 4 stating that there is no significant difference in the mean score of any specific cultural elements on foreign culture among children of different age groups was upheld for British subjects, but was partially rejected for Chinese subjects as significant differences were found only in two British cultural elements.

On the other hand, children of the same age groups performed differently with respect to different cultures. Data in Table 15 showed the significant differences between B1 and C1, B3 and C3, and B5 and C5 in British culture, Anglo-American culture and Chinese culture. The results indicated that children of the same age groups performed better on items of



native culture than that of foreign culture. In other words, there is a marked difference in the availability of cultural schemata on different cultures for children of the same age groups. Thus, Hypothesis 5 stating that there is no significant difference in the overall performance between native culture and foreign culture among children of the same age groups was rejected.

Similarly, the performance of children of the same age groups on different cultural elements in different cultures displayed a pattern of marked differences. Significant differences were found between B1 and C1, B3 and C3, B5 and C5 in every cultural elements of different cultures (Table 16, 17). Again, children of the same age groups performed better in their native cultural elements. Thus Hypothesis 6 stating that there is no significant difference in mean score in any specific cultural elements between native culture and foreign culture among children of the same age groups was rejected.

To conclude, the present study provides a start for the understanding of the availability of cultural schemata in native culture and foreign culture among children of the same and the different age groups. More significantly, the performance of the Chinese learners in British/Anglo-American culture in this study highlights a developmental trend in the acquisition of cultural knowledge of the target language.



### 6.3 Pedagogical Implications

The findings of the present study reveal significant differences in the availability of cultural schemata between native speakers and EFL/ESL learners in various cultural elements of the target language. Such findings echo the assertion of Goodman and Goodman (1978), cited in Steffensen (1987:48), that "cultural effect was more pronounced in the higher than in the lower grades, supporting the claim that schema development is correlated with age". With a developmental orientation in the acquisition of cultural schemata, the educational significance of the present study is sharply contrary to Maley's (1989:20) oversimplification that "cross-cultural studies can become cut off from the classroom" and "become a self-contained end in themselves rather than a tool for action". To reach a level of 'communicative competence' (Hymes, 1972) comparable to that of the native speakers, the narrowing of cultural difference is a plausible solution for target language learners. Recognizing that "complete mastery of a language is dependent upon knowledge of the culture" (Steffensen and Joag-dev, 1984:49), one would immediately ask what appropriate cultural contents are suitable for students at different stages of development. Whether culture is teachable, and how cultural elements of the target language are to be integrated in lessons would likely be the basic pedagogical considerations in any EFL/ESL programmes.



"Cultural understanding and cross-cultural comparisons are a necessary component of language pedagogy" (Stern, 1983:250). As EFL/ESL teachers, one of our roles in the reading classroom is "to minimize reading difficulties and to maximize comprehension by providing culturally relevant information" (Carrell and Eisterhold, 1983:566). Cultural knowledge must be explicitly taught (Ashour and Marhama, 1990; Barnitz, 1986; Chastain, 1976; Floyd and Carrell, 1987; Johnson, 1982; Lewis, 1989; McLeod, 1980; Rauf, 1988) so as to produce 'induced schemata' (Hudson, 1982) for the reader, particularly the less proficient ones.

As cultural assumptions lie behind the language, it is essential to help learners acquire the basic cultural traits of the target language. Vast cultural differences have been illustrated in the item responses of the Reading Test (Appendix 7). For example, in tradition and customs, all British subjects regardless of age were familiar with 'cricket' (Item 1) and 'fish and chips' (Item 4). The comparatively low percentages of response for Chinese counterparts in these respects straightly reveal their ignorance of some of the dominant features in British way of living. In addition, over 97% of the British subjects regarded 'dog' as man's best friend (Item 16) while only about 30% of the Chinese subjects held the same value. Obviously it is necessary to include the cultural aspect of the target language in the existing language syllabus.



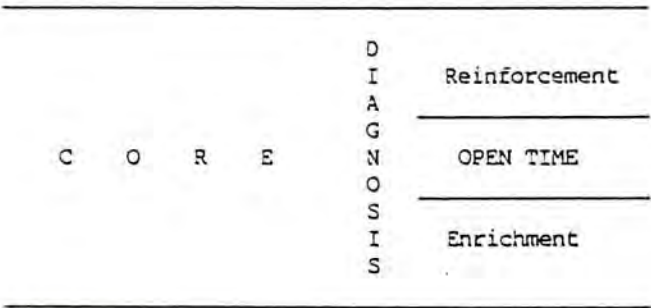
The inclusion of cultural content in the English course in Moroccan context (Adaskou, Britten and Fahsi, 1990), the integration of cultural component in the culture syllabus of the core French curriculum in Canadian context (Hebert, 1990; LeBlanc and Courtel, 1990) and the coverage of cultural themes in textbooks for Spanish language program in New York State (Ramirez and Hall, 1990) may provide insightful references for Hong Kong ESL/EFL educators. In the planning of the course, the culture, ethics and social attitudes of the learners should not be neglected (Lewis, 1989). Materials should be presented in such a way that learners come to realize how the people live with the target culture. Pedagogically, "students should be helped to appreciate the universality of human experience, their own culture and values as well as other people's" (Finocchiaro, 1976:7).

The teaching of culture "should be integrated into every aspect of teaching" (McLeod, 1980:544). Indeed the cultural component can be integrated in other disciplines such as social studies (Abbey, 1973), art, geography, history, religious studies, among others. It is not only that teachers concerned with mother tongue teaching and foreign/second language teaching should be in close cooperation to heighten the learners' cultural awareness in native and foreign cultures, other subject teachers should also adopt a thematic approach to curriculum by integrating subject contents and related cultural aspects into thematic units. As for the time allocation, the 'Core Plus



Open Time Approach' as suggested by Lafayette (1978) seems to be the most flexible solution for language classes in Hong Kong schools. In Lafayette's (1978) model, the majority of the time is allocated for the teaching of core materials and a session of open time for reinforcement or enrichment activities. The core materials could be language and the enrichment materials culture, or vice versa, depending on the focus of the curriculum.

Figure 5: Core Plus Open Time Model



Turning to the cultural materials, the renewal of interest in the teaching of literature (Kelliny, 1989; Spack, 1985) has become a major thrust in foreign/second language teaching. Not only can the text be "a powerful mode of acculturation" (Mitchell, 1989:79), it also helps learners "in identifying and realising the use of the language in different and natural communicative contexts" (Kelliny, 1989:600). Indeed literature of the target language is "an ideal vehicle for illustrating language use and introducing cultural assumptions" (McKay, 1982).

Folklore is a rich source of ethnic charm and provides the best way of seeing life patterns of a culture from inside out rather than from outside in. Cultural knowledge such as traditions, superstitions, games, proverbs, songs, dances, blessings, folktales, and myths are interesting to language learners with integrative motives. Activities generated from folklore for children not only enhance their appreciation to other cultural heritage (Chan, 1984), but also broaden their minds and help to develop imagination and critical reasoning (Goodman and Melcher, 1984).

Besides, popular songs and music in the language classroom almost guarantee a 'monitor-free' environment for language 'acquisition' (Krashen, 1982; 1985). Unlike the artificial sentence constructions in textbooks, lyrics are vivid representation of the living language with which learners can be guided to compare and contrast the themes, melodies, singing styles and the background of the singers of songs sung in the target language with those sung in native language (Urbancic and Vizmuller, 1981). Non-news items in newspapers (Blatchford, 1973) and even postage stamps (Nuessel, 1984) are valuable sources of cultural materials.

Graded readers serve as indispensable tools in gearing the linguistic form of input for learners at different stages of language development. They should be carefully selected with comprehensible culturally-loaded materials so as to make learners



aware of the correct levels of discourse, modes of behaviour as well as the social attitudes and values of the people in the target culture. They should also motivate learners to observe the cultural diversities and reduce their antipathy towards a foreign culture.

The use of dialogues in role playing helps in practising language structures as well as social formulae of the target culture (Paulston, 1974). The 'cross-cultural adjustment' (Donahue and Parsons, 1982) in role-play provides chances for learners to practise social interactions in a foreign culture. As the communicative competence of the target language gradually builds up, cultural misunderstandings such as those reported in Holmes and Brown (1980), Noguchi (1987), Sukwiat (1981), Tannen (1984) and Wierzbicka (1985) can be avoided.

Richards (1981) gave a classic local illustration of the inappropriateness in a conversational exchange:

- A. Do drop round and visit us some time.
- B. Yes of course, if I am free.

According to Richards, B fails at the level of social competence imposing a threat to the speaker's face without familiarizing with the English convention on freedom of action. 'Yes I will' or 'Thank you, I would love to' would be more appropriate. However B's response is perfectly acceptable in Chinese cultural context showing an appreciation and a promissory acceptance of the invitation. Dialogues in role-playing definitely help to



reduce such misunderstanding and foster cultural conventions.

Nevertheless the chosen dialogues for the role-play should be matched with the age and interests of the learners and culturally appropriate for native speakers of the target language. Certainly direct contact with native speakers in school projects such as street interviews, if possible, are particularly helpful for learners to have an authentic use of the target language with speakers from foreign culture.

Cultural awareness can also be effectively fostered with the use of films and videos. With the presentation of facial expressions, posture, gestures, tonal variations and other paralinguistic features, films and videos can "potentially provide depth knowledge of target languages and cultures to a degree which can only be surpassed by face-to-face interaction with speakers of the target language" (Pierson, 1989:582). The discussion session on cultural similarities and differences is vital in sharing cultural experiences and in the acquisition of cultural competence.

The crucial problems that course designers have to tackle are how cultural content can be arranged appropriately throughout the course; and how teaching materials are graded culturally, linguistically, and communicatively. Noting Young's (1987:15) remark that "many classroom techniques which work successfully in a Western cultural context will not work when applied to TESOL in a Chinese context", Hong Kong inevitably needs a cultural



syllabus in the second language curriculum catering for the majority of the school learners who are mostly 'instrumentally' motivated. Ironically, it seems ridiculous to expect students to learn a foreign/second language with 'integrative' (Gardner and Lambert, 1972) motivation without motivating them integratively by imparting them relevant cultural knowledge at appropriate times. The prevailing absence of cultural contents in English teaching materials simply deprives students of the chance of learning the language integratively. At the present stage, it is a must that second/foreign language teachers should take initial steps to introduce appropriate cultural schemata to the instrumentally motivated learners whenever possible.

In dealing with cultural features, Crewe and Tong (1988) suggest that 'side-teaching' (Stern 1987) is more preferable in Hong Kong situation while 'pre-teaching' is needed only if there is an extensive information gap which impairs the central theme of the text. Such an approach would be very superficial as compared with the notion 'culture across curriculum'.

All in all, more authentic integration of cultural contents in foreign language lessons would promote interest and appreciation of the target culture and help to change the learning attitude of the learners in a subtle and far-reaching way. "To expect that a student will develop reading efficiency without cultural orientation is a blissful illusion" (Rauf,

1988:46). Furthermore "cultural isolation is the cause of the failure to acquire the second language" (d'Anglejan, 1978:233) and without the cultural component, "no language program can make a claim to authenticity since it would be leaving out one of the richest features" (Westphal, 1986:91) that the language possesses.



#### 6.4 Suggestions for Further Research

The findings of the present exploratory study raise more questions than they supply solutions to the research problems. In view of the limitations in the present study, the results are best regarded as tentative propositions which may hopefully enlighten the way for subsequent research.

1. A more obvious developmental trend has been found for the Chinese subjects than their British counterparts in the acquisition of cultural schemata on native culture and foreign culture. The present study should be replicated with more testing items in different cultural elements with different levels of difficulty. Such replication helps to confirm the universality of the developmental trend in the acquisition of cultural schemata with a more acceptable reliability.

2. Hong Kong is a place where western and oriental cultures meet. British subjects in Hong Kong schools are under constant impact of varieties of cultures while Chinese subjects are also under tremendous influence of western cultures through various mass media. Will the findings of the present study be the same if it is conducted in uncontaminated sociocultural contexts, say, in Britain and in the People's Republic of China?

3. "The research into interaction of cultural schemata and reading comprehension is informative for educators who seek to bring multicultural understanding to school children" (LeSourd,

1988:13). Apart from EFL/ESL contexts, it is a necessity to explore the acquisition of cultural schemata on non-native cultures in EIL (Smith, 1981) context. More cross-cultural research of this kind would undoubtedly provide us with a better understanding in this relatively unexplored area.



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Appendix 1A

## READING TEST

Time Allowed: 30 minutes

## Instructions:

1. There are 11 pages in this question paper. The test consists of Part A and Part B.
2. Answer all questions in the test.
3. All the answers should be marked on the Answer Sheet.
4. The question paper and the answer sheet will be collected at the end of the test.



Part A

Read the short passages carefully. Choose the most suitable answer for each question and put the answer on the answer sheet.

---

1. Mr White: What's the news?

Mr Smith: Yorkshire were all out for 403 runs.

What game are they talking about?

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| A. Basketball. | B. Rugby.    |
| C. Cricket.    | D. Football. |
| E. Hunting.    |              |
- 

2. John: What are those things?

Siu Ming: Rice dumplings. We usually have them today.

At what festival do Chinese usually eat rice dumplings?

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A. Dragon Boat Festival. | B. Mid-Autumn Festival.  |
| C. Chinese New Year.     | D. Chung Yeung Festival. |
| E. Ching Ming Festival.  |                          |
- 

3. Tom has just spent a week in Britain. He stayed with his pen-friend, Alex. Now they are saying goodbye at the airport.

Alex: Come again if you have time.

Tom: Sure. I enjoyed the high tea very much.

Which part of Britain does Alex live in?

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| A. Wales.           | B. Scotland.         |
| C. Ireland.         | D. Southern England. |
| E. Eastern England. |                      |
-

4. Tina: Look! There's a pair of white lanterns hanging in front of that house.

Guide: Come on. This is a Chinese way of telling people that \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. someone has died
  - B. someone has got married
  - C. a new baby has been born
  - D. a birthday celebration will be held
  - E. someone is getting rich
- 

5. Simon: Where have you been?

Brian: Epsom.

Simon: How was it? Did you have any luck?

Brian: Oh, good. It was wonderful.

What did Brian do at Epsom?

- |             |                  |
|-------------|------------------|
| A. Fishing. | B. Motor-racing. |
| C. Hunting. | D. Horse-racing. |
| E. Skiing.  |                  |
- 

6. Susan: Hey, what are you carrying?

Chi Ming: It's a sugar-cane plant. I am taking it home for my mother from the market.

Susan: Why don't you ask people to cut it up?

Chi Ming: No. It's a Chinese tradition to keep the whole plant at home for the coming festival.

What Chinese festival is coming?

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A. Dragon Boat Festival. | B. Mid-Autumn Festival.  |
| C. Chinese New Year.     | D. Chung Yeung Festival. |
| E. Ching Ming Festival.  |                          |
-



7. Shopkeeper: Salt and vinegar on it?

Customer: Oh, yes. Just a little.

What kind of food can you buy in the shop?

- |                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| A. Hamburgers. | B. Steaks.         |
| C. Sandwiches. | D. Fish and chips. |
| E. Noodles.    |                    |
- 

8. Mei Mei: Uncle Chan is going to move into his new house next week.  
What shall we buy for him?

Mother: We can send him a Chinese painting but definitely not  
\_\_\_\_\_.

- |             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| A. a cooker | B. a lamp  |
| C. a table  | D. a clock |
| E. a book   |            |
- 

9. Jane: Mum, what should I wear?

Mother: A black dress, I think. No brightly-coloured clothes,  
please.

They are going to \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                     |              |
|---------------------|--------------|
| A. a funeral        | B. church    |
| C. a birthday party | D. a wedding |
| E. a dinner party   |              |
- 

10. John: Good morning. Can I speak to Peter, please?

Mary: I'm afraid he's not here. Would you mind calling him up  
again after the tea-break?

What time did Mary ask John to telephone Peter?

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| A. After 9 a.m.  | B. After 10 a.m.  |
| C. After 11 a.m. | D. After 12 noon. |
| E. After 1 p.m.  |                   |
-

11. Chi Shing and Siu Lan are talking about their wedding.

Chi Shing: We've almost finished our preparations, haven't we?

Siu Lan: Wait a minute.            You forget the gift for my little brother.

Chi Shing: Oh, yes.        I should buy him \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                       |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| A. a watch            | B. a wallet |
| C. a pair of shoes    | D. a shirt  |
| E. a pair of trousers |             |
- 

12. It was Saturday afternoon.        The milkman came and he knocked at John's door.        No one answered.

He left a message: "I'll come again later today."

The milkman will come again \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                                  |                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| A. to get milk for John          | B. to talk with John      |
| C. to collect milk bottles       | D. to say "hello" to John |
| E. to collect money for the milk |                           |
- 

13. Mr Lee is having a meal in a Chinese restaurant.        The food he ordered has just come.

Mr Lee: Could I have the sweet and sour plum sauce?        It goes with this dish, doesn't it?

Waiter: Oh, sorry.        I'll get it right away.

What dish has Mr Lee ordered?

- |                      |                  |
|----------------------|------------------|
| A. Roast chicken.    | B. Steamed fish. |
| C. Mixed vegetables. | D. Pork chop.    |
| E. Roast duck.       |                  |
-



14. The Chan family have just had a new baby.

Mr Chan: When shall we have our celebration with our relatives?

Mrs Chan: Don't worry. According to Chinese customs, we shall have it \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| A. a week later       | B. three weeks later |
| C. one month later    | D. two months later  |
| E. three months later |                      |
- 

15. Siu Ming met Tim yesterday.

"What are you doing now? Is the pay good?" Siu Ming asked Tim.

What is Tim's likely reaction/response?

- A. Tim would be very happy to have such a kind and caring friend.
  - B. Tim would think Siu Ming was impolite to ask such questions.
  - C. Tim would tell Siu Ming about his job and the pay happily.
  - D. Tim would ask Siu Ming if he was finding a new job.
  - E. Tim would ask Siu Ming if he wanted some money.
- 

16. Mr Chan invited a lot of friends to a banquet in a splendid Chinese restaurant.

Before the meal started, he said, "I don't have much to serve you. Please help yourselves."

What kind of person do you think Mr Chan is?

- |                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| A. Poor.         | B. Miserly. |
| C. Modest.       | D. Honest.  |
| E. Hypocritical. |             |
-

17. Peter and Susan got out of a taxi. Susan insisted on paying back Peter the fare. Peter took her money after thinking for a while.

What kind of person do you think Peter is?

- |          |                   |
|----------|-------------------|
| A. Poor. | B. Money-minded.  |
| C. Rude. | D. Good-mannered. |
| E. Kind. |                   |
- 

18. John got off the bus and waved goodbye to David at a crowded bus-stop.

"John, remember to phone me tonight," David shouted as loud as he could from the upper deck.

Which of the following is true?

- A. David reminded John to phone him politely.
  - B. David was too happy to wave goodbye to John.
  - C. David behaved rudely.
  - D. David was right to shout because he was on the upper deck.
  - E. David was a thoughtful person.
- 

19. A Chinese old man was taking a rest in a park.

A little girl came and talked to him, "You are strong and healthy. How old are you?"

What is the old man's likely reaction/response?

- A. He would thank the girl but would not tell her his age.
  - B. He would walk away.
  - C. He would be happy to tell her his age.
  - D. He would ask the girl to go away.
  - E. He would be very angry and would not answer her question.
-



20. Chi Ming's grandmother came to visit him. Chi Ming's mother led her to the sitting room.

Mother: Would you like a cup of tea?

Grandmother: Yes, please.

Mother: Get grandma a cup of tea, Chi Ming. To be polite, you should \_\_\_\_\_.

Chi Ming: Yes, mum.

- A. taste the tea first
- B. get some tea for yourself, too
- C. get some cold tea for grandma
- D. get the tea with one hand
- E. get the tea with both hands

21. Sam is taking part in a Quiz Competition.

The question: 'What is man's best friend?'

Without much thinking, Sam shouts out his answer.

What answer does he give?

- |           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| A. Money. | B. Neighbour. |
| C. Dog.   | D. Brother.   |
| E. Cat.   |               |

22. Mrs So: I dropped the mirror this morning; it broke. I believe \_\_\_\_\_.

Mr So: Come on. Don't be so superstitious.

- A. we will be rich in a short time
- B. one of us will get a better job in a short time
- C. we will have a baby soon
- D. we might have a hard time of getting together
- E. bad luck is coming

23. Judy got married last year. She is having a baby. Her neighbour, Mrs Green, met her yesterday.

Mrs Green: What do you expect, a boy or a girl?

Judy: I don't mind at all. But, you know, traditional Chinese family prefer to have \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                          |             |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| A. a boy                 | B. a girl   |
| C. twin girls            | D. no child |
| E. a double-headed child |             |

- 
24. Passing under a ladder brings \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| A. good health | B. wealth |
| C. friendship  | D. love   |
| E. bad luck.   |           |

- 
25. Mr Chan: What's happening? I've been sneezing for the whole morning.

Mrs Chan: Oh, I see. I believe \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                                 |                    |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| A. someone is talking about you | B. you need a walk |
| C. it is going to rain          | D. you are tired   |
| E. you are hungry               |                    |

- 
26. Mei Mei: Mum. Why are you putting those leaves in the boiling water?

Mother: Oh, they're pomelo leaves. The water \_\_\_\_\_.

- |   |
|---|
| A. will make me look stronger and healthier |
| B. will make me look younger and prettier   |
| C. will wash away my bad luck               |
| D. will remove all my pains                 |
| E. will cure my skin disease                |
-



27. Eating cheese late at night is believed to bring \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                |                 |
|----------------|-----------------|
| A. good health | B. sweet dreams |
| C. good luck   | D. nightmares   |
| E. friendship  |                 |
- 

28. Bob: Someone is talking about you.

Sue: How do you know?

Bob: That's easy. You've got red \_\_\_\_\_.

- |           |         |
|-----------|---------|
| A. eyes   | B. ears |
| C. cheeks | D. lips |
| E. hands  |         |
- 

29. Mr Chan went to play mahjong with his friends. On his way, he met a Chinese monk. He felt that \_\_\_\_\_ would come on that day.

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| A. bad luck   | B. good luck |
| C. friendship | D. love      |
| E. letters    |              |
- 

30. George and Simon were having a picnic in the countryside.

Simon: What a fine day!

George: No. It's going to rain.

Simon: How do you know?

George: Look! \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|
| A. Birds are flying over our heads    |
| B. Treetops are moving                |
| C. Ducks are swimming                 |
| D. Butterflies are dancing over there |
| E. Cows are lying down in the field   |
-

Part B

Read the passage carefully.

Magda just came to America. She went to a school in a small town. She knew little English. She could not understand the American humour and she laughed over things that were not funny at all. Her schoolmates did not like her and used to say, "My goodness, look at that strange girl!"

Soon Thanksgiving Day came. Everybody in school was to do something like singing and short plays for the celebration. Magda would like to say a prayer.

On Thanksgiving Day a lot of parents came to school to take their children home for the Thanksgiving dinner. They watched their children sing and play, too.

Now Magda was ready to say her prayer. Her heart was beating fast. She put her hands together over her head and said, "Oh thank you, thank you, dear God, for letting my grandfather and me come to America. I learn from my history book that Americans all came to this country just how Grandfather and I come. Thanksgiving, to be here free and safe. I, too, feel the same beautiful thank-you-God, that all we Americans say here today."

Magda did not know how to end her prayer. She just walked back to her class. The Principal said "Amen!" for her. And then, all of a sudden, all the people in the hall stood up and began to clap their hands loudly. "Three cheers for Magda!" someone cried.

"Hip-Hip! Hurrah! Hip-Hip! Hurrah! Hip-Hip! Hurrah!" they all shouted.

"Why, I understood every word. Yes, now I can understand American!" Magda said to herself, her eyes wide.

(Adapted from 'Thanksgiving Day' by D.C. Fisher)



Choose the most suitable answer for each question and put the answer on the answer sheet.

31. In America, Thanksgiving Day is \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. a time for students to look up their history books
  - B. a day for parents to watch their children playing
  - C. a fun time for children to sing and play
  - D. a day for Americans to remember their grandfathers
  - E. a time in a year for Americans to say "Thank God"
- 

32. Americans usually have \_\_\_\_\_ in their Thanksgiving dinner.

- |            |           |
|------------|-----------|
| A. fish    | B. turkey |
| C. oyster  | D. beef   |
| D. chicken |           |
- 

33. All the people stood up and clapped their hands loudly after Magda said her prayer because \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. they were happy to see Magda end her dull and boring prayer
  - B. they all shared Magda's feeling at that time
  - C. they wanted to have a better look at Magda
  - D. they were happy that Magda's English was getting better
  - E. they were happy to hear "Amen!" from their Principal
- 

34. "Yes, now I can understand American!" Magda said to herself.

She meant she understood \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. how to pray in America
  - B. American English
  - C. American humour
  - D. American history
  - E. the directness and openness of Americans
- 

..... END .....

ANSWER SHEET

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
                            day / month / year                              year : month

Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Stay in Hong Kong: \_\_\_\_\_ years

Answers: Write down the LETTER only.

Part A

1. _____	8. _____	15. _____
2. _____	9. _____	16. _____
3. _____	10. _____	17. _____
4. _____	11. _____	18. _____
5. _____	12. _____	19. _____
6. _____	13. _____	20. _____
7. _____	14. _____	21. _____
		22. _____

Part B

23. _____	31. _____
24. _____	32. _____
25. _____	33. _____
26. _____	34. _____
27. _____	
28. _____	
29. _____	
30. _____	

How much contact do you have  
with the Anglo-American  
tradition, customs and  
culture?

(Please tick ✓ )

\_\_\_\_\_ Never

\_\_\_\_\_ Rare

\_\_\_\_\_ Occasional

\_\_\_\_\_ Intermittent

\_\_\_\_\_ Regular

\_\_\_\_\_ Frequent

How much contact do you have  
with the Chinese tradition,  
customs and culture?

(Please tick ✓ )

\_\_\_\_\_ Never

\_\_\_\_\_ Rare

\_\_\_\_\_ Occasional

\_\_\_\_\_ Intermittent

\_\_\_\_\_ Regular

\_\_\_\_\_ Frequent

....THANK YOU VERY MUCH....



Appendix 1B

## READING TEST

Time Allowed: 30 minutes

## Instructions:

1. There are 11 pages in this question paper. The test consists of Part A and Part B.
2. Answer all questions in the test.
3. All the answers should be marked on the Answer Sheet.
4. The question paper and the answer sheet will be collected at the end of the test.

Part A

Read the short passages carefully. Choose the most suitable answer for each question and put the answer on the answer sheet.

1. Mr White: What's the news?

Mr Smith: Yorkshire (约克郡) were all out for 403 runs.

What game are they talking about?

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| A. Basketball. | B. Rugby.    |
| C. Cricket.    | D. Football. |
| E. Hunting.    |              |

2. John: What are those things?

Siu Ming: Rice dumplings (粽). We usually have them today.

At what festival do Chinese usually eat rice dumplings?

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A. Dragon Boat Festival. | B. Mid-Autumn Festival.  |
| C. Chinese New Year.     | D. Chung Yeung Festival. |
| E. Ching Ming Festival.  |                          |

3. Tom has just spent a week in Britain. He stayed with his pen-friend, Alex. Now they are saying goodbye at the airport.

Alex: Come again if you have time.

Tom: Sure. I enjoyed the high tea very much.

Which part of Britain does Alex live in?

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| A. Wales.           | B. Scotland.         |
| C. Ireland.         | D. Southern England. |
| E. Eastern England. |                      |



4. Tina: Look! There's a pair of white lanterns (燈籠) hanging in front of that house.

Guide: Come on. This is a Chinese way of telling people that \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. someone has died
- B. someone has got married
- C. a new baby has been born
- D. a birthday celebration will be held
- E. someone is getting rich

5. Simon: Where have you been?

Brian: Epsom.

Simon: How was it? Did you have any luck?

Brian: Oh, good. It was wonderful.

What did Brian do at Epsom?

- |                  |                       |
|------------------|-----------------------|
| A. Fishing (釣魚). | B. Motor-racing (賽車). |
| C. Hunting (打獵). | D. Horse-racing (賽馬). |
| E. Skiing (滑雪).  |                       |

6. Susan: Hey, what are you carrying?

Chi Ming: It's a sugar-cane plant (一根蔗). I am taking it home for my mother from the market.

Susan: Why don't you ask people to cut it up?

Chi Ming: No. It's a Chinese tradition to keep the whole plant at home for the coming festival.

What Chinese festival is coming?

- |                          |                          |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| A. Dragon Boat Festival. | B. Mid-Autumn Festival.  |
| C. Chinese New Year.     | D. Chung Yeung Festival. |
| E. Ching Ming Festival.  |                          |

7. Shopkeeper: Salt and vinegar ( 醋 ) on it?

Customer: Oh, yes. Just a little.

What kind of food can you buy in the shop?

- |                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| A. Hamburgers. | B. Steaks.         |
| C. Sandwiches. | D. Fish and chips. |
| E. Noodles.    |                    |
- 

8. Mei Mei: Uncle Chan is going to move into his new house next week. What shall we buy for him?

Mother: We can send him a Chinese painting but definitely not \_\_\_\_\_.

- |             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| A. a cooker | B. a lamp  |
| C. a table  | D. a clock |
| E. a book   |            |
- 

9. Jane: Mum, what should I wear?

Mother: A black dress, I think. No brightly-coloured ( 鮮艷的 ) clothes, please.

They are going to \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                             |                     |
|-----------------------------|---------------------|
| A. a funeral ( 葬禮 )         | B. church ( 教堂 )    |
| C. a birthday party ( 生日會 ) | D. a wedding ( 婚禮 ) |
| E. a dinner party ( 晚宴 )    |                     |
- 

10. John: Good morning. Can I speak to Peter, please?

Mary: I'm afraid he's not here. Would you mind calling him up again after the tea-break?

What time did Mary ask John to telephone Peter?

- |                  |                   |
|------------------|-------------------|
| A. After 9 a.m.  | B. After 10 a.m.  |
| C. After 11 a.m. | D. After 12 noon. |
| E. After 1 p.m.  |                   |
-



11. Chi Shing (志成) and Siu Lan (小蘭) are talking about their wedding.

Chi Shing: We've almost finished our preparations (預備), haven't we?

Siu Lan: Wait a minute. You forget the gift for my little brother.

Chi Shing: Oh, yes. I should buy him \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                       |             |
|-----------------------|-------------|
| A. a watch            | B. a wallet |
| C. a pair of shoes    | D. a shirt  |
| E. a pair of trousers |             |

12. It was Saturday afternoon. The milkman came and he knocked at John's door. No one answered.

He left a message: "I'll come again later today."

The milkman will come again \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                                  |                           |
|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| A. to get milk for John          | B. to talk with John      |
| C. to collect milk bottles       | D. to say "hello" to John |
| E. to collect money for the milk |                           |

13. Mr Lee is having a meal in a Chinese restaurant. The food he ordered has just come.

Mr Lee: Could I have the sweet and sour plum sauce (酸梅醬)? It goes with this dish, doesn't it?

Waiter: Oh, sorry. I'll get it right away.

What dish has Mr Lee ordered?

- |                      |                  |
|----------------------|------------------|
| A. Roast chicken.    | B. Steamed fish. |
| C. Mixed vegetables. | D. Pork chop.    |
| E. Roast duck.       |                  |

14. The Chan family have just had a new baby.

Mr Chan: When shall we have our celebration with our relatives (親友)?

Mrs Chan: Don't worry. According to Chinese customs (習俗), we shall have it \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                       |                      |
|-----------------------|----------------------|
| A. a week later       | B. three weeks later |
| C. one month later    | D. two months later  |
| E. three months later |                      |
- 

15. Siu Ming met Tim yesterday.

"What are you doing now? Is the pay (薪金) good?" Siu Ming asked Tim.

What is Tim's likely reaction/response (反應)?

- A. Tim would be very happy to have such a kind and caring (關懷的) friend.
  - B. Tim would think Siu Ming was impolite to ask such questions.
  - C. Tim would tell Siu Ming about his job and the pay happily.
  - D. Tim would ask Siu Ming if he was finding a new job.
  - E. Tim would ask Siu Ming if he wanted some money.
- 

16. Mr Chan invited a lot of friends to a banquet (宴會) in a splendid (華麗的) Chinese restaurant.

Before the meal started, he said, "I don't have much to serve you. Please help yourselves."

What kind of person do you think Mr Chan is?

- |                        |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------|
| A. Poor (貧窮的).         | B. Miserly (孤寒的). |
| C. Modest (謙遜的).       | D. Honest (誠實的).  |
| E. Hypocritical (虛偽的). |                   |
-



17. Peter and Susan got out of a taxi. Susan insisted on (堅持) paying back Peter the fare. Peter took her money after thinking for a while.

What kind of person do you think Peter is?

- |          |                   |
|----------|-------------------|
| A. Poor. | B. Money-minded.  |
| C. Rude. | D. Good-mannered. |
| E. Kind. |                   |
- 

18. John got off the bus and waved goodbye to David at a crowded bus-stop.

"John, remember to phone me tonight," David shouted as loud as he could from the upper deck (上層).

Which of the following is true?

- A. David reminded (提醒) John to phone him politely.  
 B. David was too happy to wave goodbye to John.  
 C. David behaved rudely.  
 D. David was right to shout because he was on the upper deck.  
 E. David was a thoughtful (有心思的) person.
- 

19. A Chinese old man was taking a rest in a park.

A little girl came and talked to him, "You are strong and healthy. How old are you?"

What is the old man's likely reaction/response?

- A. He would thank the girl but would not tell her his age.  
 B. He would walk away.  
 C. He would be happy to tell her his age.  
 D. He would ask the girl to go away.  
 E. He would be very angry and would not answer her question.
-

20. Chi Ming's grandmother came to visit him. Chi Ming's mother led her to the sitting room.

Mother: Would you like a cup of tea?

Grandmother: Yes, please.

Mother: Get grandma a cup of tea, Chi Ming. To be polite, you should \_\_\_\_\_.

Chi Ming: Yes, mum.

- A. taste the tea first
- B. get some tea for yourself, too
- C. get some cold tea for grandma
- D. get the tea with one hand
- E. get the tea with both hands

21. Sam is taking part in a Quiz Competition ( 問 答 比 賽 ).

The question: 'What is man's best friend?'

Without much thinking, Sam shouts out his answer.

What answer does he give?

- |           |               |
|-----------|---------------|
| A. Money. | B. Neighbour. |
| C. Dog.   | D. Brother.   |
| E. Cat.   |               |

22. Mrs So: I dropped the mirror ( 鏡 子 ) this morning; it broke.  
I believe ( 相 信 ) \_\_\_\_\_.

Mr So: Come on. Don't be so superstitious ( 迷 信 ).

- A. we will be rich in a short time
  - B. one of us will get a better job in a short time
  - C. we will have a baby soon
  - D. we might have a hard time of getting together
  - E. bad luck is coming
-



23. Judy got married last year. She is having a baby. Her neighbour, Mrs Green, met her yesterday.

Mrs Green: What do you expect, a boy or a girl?

Judy: I don't mind at all. But, you know, traditional Chinese family prefer to have \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                          |             |
|--------------------------|-------------|
| A. a boy                 | B. a girl   |
| C. twin girls            | D. no child |
| E. a double-headed child |             |
- 

24. Passing under a ladder brings \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                |           |
|----------------|-----------|
| A. good health | B. wealth |
| C. friendship  | D. love   |
| E. bad luck.   |           |
- 

25. Mr Chan: What's happening? I've been sneezing (打噴嚏) for the whole morning.

Mrs Chan: Oh, I see. I believe \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                                 |                    |
|---------------------------------|--------------------|
| A. someone is talking about you | B. you need a walk |
| C. it is going to rain          | D. you are tired   |
| E. you are hungry               |                    |
- 

26. Mei Mei: Mum. Why are you putting those leaves in the boiling water?

Mother: Oh, they're pomelo leaves (柚葉). The water \_\_\_\_\_.

- |   |
|---|
| A. will make me look stronger and healthier |
| B. will make me look younger and prettier   |
| C. will wash away my bad luck               |
| D. will remove all my pains                 |
| E. will cure my skin disease                |
-

27. Eating cheese (芝士) late at night is believed to bring \_\_\_\_.

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| A. good health (健康) | B. sweet dreams (美梦) |
| C. good luck (幸运)   | D. nightmares (噩梦)   |
| E. friendship (友谊)  |                      |
- 

28. Bob: Someone is talking about you.

Sue: How do you know?

Bob: That's easy. You've got red \_\_\_\_.

- |           |         |
|-----------|---------|
| A. eyes   | B. ears |
| C. cheeks | D. lips |
| E. hands  |         |
- 

29. Mr Chan went to play mahjong with his friends. On his way, he met a Chinese monk (和尚). He felt that \_\_\_\_ would come on that day.

- |               |              |
|---------------|--------------|
| A. bad luck   | B. good luck |
| C. friendship | D. love      |
| E. letters    |              |
- 

30. George and Simon were having a picnic in the countryside.

Simon: What a fine day!

George: No. It's going to rain.

Simon: How do you know?

George: Look! \_\_\_\_.

- |                                       |
|---------------------------------------|
| A. Birds are flying over our heads    |
| B. Treetops are moving                |
| C. Ducks are swimming                 |
| D. Butterflies are dancing over there |
| E. Cows are lying down in the field   |
-



Part B

Read the passage carefully.

Magda just came to America. She went to a school in a small town. She knew little English. She could not understand the American humour (幽默) and she laughed over things that were not funny at all. Her schoolmates did not like her and used to say, "My goodness, look at that strange girl!"

Soon Thanksgiving Day came. Everybody in school was to do something like singing and short plays for the celebration. Magda would like to say a prayer.

On Thanksgiving Day a lot of parents came to school to take their children home for the Thanksgiving dinner. They watched their children sing and play, too.

Now Magda was ready to say her prayer. Her heart was beating fast. She put her hands together over her head and said, "Oh thank you, thank you, dear God, for letting my grandfather and me come to America. I learn from my history book that Americans all came to this country just how Grandfather and I come. Thanksgiving, to be here free and safe. I, too, feel the same beautiful thank-you-God, that all we Americans say here today."

Magda did not know how to end her prayer. She just walked back to her class. The Principal said "Amen!" for her. And then, all of a sudden, all the people in the hall stood up and began to clap their hands loudly. "Three cheers for Magda!" someone cried.

"Hip-Hip! Hurrah! Hip-Hip! Hurrah! Hip-Hip! Hurrah!" they all shouted.

"Why, I understood every word. Yes, now I can understand American!" Magda said to herself, her eyes wide.

(Adapted from 'Thanksgiving Day' by D.C. Fisher)

Choose the most suitable answer for each question and put the answer on the answer sheet.

31. In America, Thanksgiving Day is \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. a time for students to look up their history books
  - B. a day for parents to watch their children playing
  - C. a fun time for children to sing and play
  - D. a day for Americans to remember their grandfathers
  - E. a time in a year for Americans to say "Thank God"
- 

32. Americans usually have \_\_\_\_\_ in their Thanksgiving dinner.

- |            |       |           |        |
|------------|-------|-----------|--------|
| A. fish    | ( 魚 ) | B. turkey | ( 火雞 ) |
| C. oyster  | ( 蠔 ) | D. beef   | ( 牛肉 ) |
| D. chicken | ( 雞 ) |           |        |
- 

33. All the people stood up and clapped their hands loudly after Magda said her prayer because \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. they were happy to see Magda end her dull and boring prayer
  - B. they all shared Magda's feeling at that time
  - C. they wanted to have a better look at Magda
  - D. they were happy that Magda's English was getting better
  - E. they were happy to hear "Amen!" from their Principal
- 

34. "Yes, now I can understand American!" Magda said to herself.

She meant she understood \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. how to pray in America
  - B. American English
  - C. American humour
  - D. American history
  - E. the directness and openness of Americans
- 

....END....



## ANSWER SHEET

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
                             day / month / year                              year : month

Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Stay in Hong Kong: \_\_\_\_\_ years

Answers: Write down the LETTER only.

## Part A

- |          |           |           |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 8. _____  | 15. _____ | 23. _____ | 31. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 9. _____  | 16. _____ | 24. _____ | 32. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 10. _____ | 17. _____ | 25. _____ | 33. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 11. _____ | 18. _____ | 26. _____ | 34. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 12. _____ | 19. _____ | 27. _____ |           |
| 6. _____ | 13. _____ | 20. _____ | 28. _____ |           |
| 7. _____ | 14. _____ | 21. _____ | 29. _____ |           |
|          |           | 22. _____ | 30. _____ |           |

## Part B

How much contact do you have  
with the Anglo-American  
tradition, customs and  
culture?

你接觸英美傳統、習俗及  
文化有多少？

(Please tick ✓)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Never (從沒有)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rare (很少的)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Occasional (偶然的)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Intermittent (間斷的)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Regular (經常的)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Frequent (頻密的)

How much contact do you have  
with the Chinese tradition,  
customs and culture?

你接觸中國傳統、習俗及  
文化有多少？

(Please tick ✓)

- \_\_\_\_\_ Never (從沒有)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rare (很少的)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Occasional (偶然的)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Intermittent (間斷的)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Regular (經常的)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Frequent (頻密的)

....THANK YOU VERY MUCH....

Appendix 2

## Test Administration Procedure

1. Distribute the answer sheet.
2. Ask students to fill in all personal particulars at the top of the answer sheet. Help them, if necessary.
3. Remind students to tick the appropriate answer for the two questions at the bottom of the answer sheet at the end of the test.
4. Distribute the question paper.
5. There are \_\_\_\_\_ pages in the question paper. Ask students to check if there are missing pages.
6. Remind students to answer all questions.
7. Before starting the test, say 'The time is .... You can start now.'
8. The time allowed for the test is 30 minutes. Write down the finishing time on the blackboard.
9. When time is up, please collect all question papers and answer sheets.
10. Please complete the record form.

..... THANK YOU VERY MUCH .....



Appendix 3

## Record Form

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Class: \_\_\_\_\_

No. of Participants: \_\_\_\_\_

Actual Time Required: \_\_\_\_\_ minutes.

Remarks:

---

---

---

---

---

---

  
Teacher's signature

Appendix 4A

## READING TEST

Time Allowed: 30 minutes

Instructions:

1. There are 10 pages in this question paper. The test consists of Part A and Part B.
2. Answer all questions in the test.
3. All the answers should be marked on the Answer Sheet.
4. Please check that all questions have been answered before the end of the test.
5. The question paper and the answer sheet will be collected after the test.



Part A

Read the short passages carefully. Choose the most suitable answer for each question and put the answer on the answer sheet.

---

1. Mr White: What's the score?

Mr Smith: Yorkshire were all out for 403 runs.

What game are they talking about?

- A. Cricket.  
C. Hunting.

- B. Rugby.  
D. Football.
- 

2. John: What are those things?

Siu Ming: Rice dumplings. We always have them at this time of a year.

At what festival do the Chinese usually eat rice dumplings?

- A. Chinese New Year.  
C. Dragon Boat Festival.

- B. Mid-Autumn Festival.  
D. Ching Ming Festival.
- 

3. Tina: Look! There's a pair of white lanterns hanging in front of that house.

Guide: Mm. This is a Chinese way of telling people that \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. someone has got married  
B. someone has died  
C. someone has had a new baby  
D. someone has just won a fortune
-

4. Shopkeeper: Salt and vinegar on it?

Customer: Yes, please. Just a little, though.

What kind of food is the customer buying?

- |                |                    |
|----------------|--------------------|
| A. Hamburgers. | B. Fish and chips. |
| C. Noodles.    | D. Steaks.         |
- 

5. Mei Mei: Uncle John is going to move into his new house next week.  
What shall we buy for him?

Mother: We could send him a Chinese painting but definitely not  
\_\_\_\_\_.

- |             |            |
|-------------|------------|
| A. a cooker | B. a book  |
| C. a table  | D. a clock |
- 

6. Jane: Mum, what should I wear?

Mother: A black dress, I think. No brightly-coloured clothes,  
please.

They are going to \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                     |                   |
|---------------------|-------------------|
| A. a funeral        | B. church         |
| C. a birthday party | D. a dinner party |
- 

7. It was Saturday afternoon. The milkman came and he knocked at  
John's door. No one answered.

He left a message: "I'll come again later today."

The milkman will come again \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                            |                                  |
|----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| A. to get milk for John    | B. to talk with John             |
| C. to collect milk bottles | D. to collect money for the milk |
-



8. Mr Lee is having a meal in a Chinese restaurant. The food he ordered has just come.

Mr Lee: Could I have the sweet and sour plum sauce? It goes with this dish, doesn't it?

Waiter: Oh, sorry. I'll get it right away.

What dish has Mr Lee ordered?

- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| A. Roast chicken. | B. Roast duck. |
| C. Steamed fish.  | D. Pork chop.  |
- 

9. John: Good morning. Can I speak to Peter, please?

Mary: I'm afraid he's not here. Would you mind calling him up again after the tea-break?

What time did Mary ask John to telephone Peter?

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| A. After 7 a.m.  | B. After 9 a.m. |
| C. After 11 a.m. | D. After 1 p.m. |
- 

10. The Chan family have just had a new baby.

Mr Chan: When shall we have our celebration with our relatives?

Mrs Chan: Well, according to Chinese customs, we should have it \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| A. a week later  | B. three weeks later |
| C. a month later | D. two months later  |
-

11. Chi Ming's grandmother came to visit him. Chi Ming's mother led her to the sitting room.

Mother: Would you like a cup of tea?

Grandmother: Yes, please.

Mother: Get grandma a cup of tea, Chi Ming. Be polite and \_\_\_\_\_.

Chi Ming: Yes, mum.

- A. taste the tea first
  - B. get some tea for yourself, too
  - C. get the tea with one hand
  - D. get the tea with both hands
- 

12. Siu Ming met Tim yesterday.

"Tim, you have got a new job recently. How much do you earn?" he asked.

What kind of person do you think Siu Ming is?

- |              |           |
|--------------|-----------|
| A. Impolite. | B. Kind.  |
| C. Caring.   | D. Proud. |
- 

13. Mr Chan invited a lot of friends to a banquet in a splendid Chinese restaurant.

Before the meal started, he said, "I am afraid I don't have much food to serve you. Please help yourselves."

What kind of person do you think Mr Chan is?

- |            |                  |
|------------|------------------|
| A. Poor.   | B. Honest.       |
| C. Modest. | D. Hypocritical. |
-



14. John got off the bus at a crowded bus-stop and waved goodbye to David.

"Phone me tonight, John," David shouted as loud as he could from the upper deck.

What kind of person do you think David is?

- |                |              |
|----------------|--------------|
| A. Thoughtful. | B. Impolite. |
| C. Impatient.  | D. Smart.    |
- 

15. An old Chinese man was sitting quietly in a park.

A little girl came and said to him, "You look strong and healthy. How old are you?"

What would the old man's most likely reaction/response be?

- |  |
|--|
| A. He would thank the girl but would not tell her his age.   |
| B. He would be very angry and would not answer her question. |
| C. He would get up and walk away.                            |
| D. He would be happy to tell her his age.                    |
- 

16. Sam is taking part in a Quiz Competition.

The question 'What is man's best friend?' comes up.

Straight away, Sam shouts out his answer.

What answer does he give?

- |               |                   |
|---------------|-------------------|
| A. His dog.   | B. His neighbour. |
| C. His money. | D. His brother.   |
-

17. Mrs So: I dropped the mirror this morning and it broke. You know what that means, don't you? \_\_\_\_\_.

Mr So: Come on. Don't be so superstitious.

- A. We're going to be rich
  - B. We're going to have some bad luck
  - C. We're going to have a baby
  - D. One of us is going to find a new job
- 

18. Peter asked Jane and Rose a question. They both shouted the answer to Peter at the same time.

Peter: How did you get here today?

Jane and Rose: By MTR.

Peter: \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. There's a letter in the post for one of you
  - B. Someone is waiting for you at home
  - C. Your dogs need feeding
  - D. It's going to rain
- 

19. Mr Chan: You know, I've been sneezing for the whole morning.

Mrs Chan: Mm. You know what that means, don't you? \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Someone is talking about you
  - B. You are going to have some bad luck
  - C. It is going to rain
  - D. Someone is going to visit us today
- 

20. Passing under a ladder brings \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                |             |
|----------------|-------------|
| A. good health | B. wealth   |
| C. bad luck    | D. quarrels |
-



21. Mei Mei: Mum. Why are you putting those leaves in the boiling water?

Mother: Oh, they're pomelo leaves. The water \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. will make me look younger and prettier
  - B. will wash away my bad luck
  - C. will remove all my pains
  - D. will cure my skin problems
- 

22. Eating cheese late at night is believed to \_\_\_\_\_.

- |                           |                        |
|---------------------------|------------------------|
| A. bring bad luck         | B. bring poor health   |
| C. give you money trouble | D. give you nightmares |
- 

23. Bob met Mary and Sue. He pointed at them.

Bob: Someone is talking about you.

Mary and Sue: How do you know?

Bob: That's easy. You've got red \_\_\_\_\_.

- |           |         |
|-----------|---------|
| A. noses  | B. ears |
| C. cheeks | D. eyes |
- 

24. Mr Chan went to play mahjong with his friends. On his way, he met a Chinese monk. He felt that \_\_\_\_\_ that day.

- A. he would lose the game
  - B. a friend would visit him
  - C. he would be lucky
  - D. he would have an accident
-

25. George and Simon were having a picnic in the countryside.

Simon: What a nice day it is today!

George: No. It's going to rain.

Simon: How do you know?

George: Look! \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. Treetops are moving
  - B. Birds are flying over our heads
  - C. Butterflies are dancing by that stream
  - D. Cows are lying down in the field
- 

26. It was Dragon Boat Festival yesterday.

Father: Tom, let's go swimming today.

Tom: Why don't we leave it till next week? I'd like to  
watch the Dragon Boat Race.

Father: No, come on. The weather is just right for a swim.  
And you know that we Chinese believe that \_\_\_\_\_ after the  
swim today.

- A. we'll be richer
  - B. our children will be taller
  - C. we'll be free of evil
  - D. we'll lose any unhappy memories we may have
-



Part B

Read the passage carefully.

Magda had just come to America. She went to a school in a small town. She knew little English. She did not understand American humour and she laughed over things that were not funny at all. Her schoolmates did not like her and used to say, "Wow, what a strange girl!"

Then Thanksgiving Day came. Everybody in school was to do something like sing and put on a short play for the celebration. Magda decided she would like to say a prayer.

On Thanksgiving Day a lot of parents came to school to watch their children play before they took them home for Thanksgiving dinner. They all enjoyed watching their children sing and play.

Then it was Magda's turn. Her heart was beating fast as she got ready to say her prayer. She put her hands together over her head and said, "Oh thank you, thank you, dear God, for letting my grandfather and me come to America. I learn from my history book that Americans all came to this country just how Grandfather and I come. Thanksgiving, to be here free and safe. I, too, feel the same beautiful thank-you-God, that all we Americans say here today."

She did not know how to end her prayer, though. She just walked back to join her class. The Principal said "Amen!" for her. And then, all of a sudden, all the people in the hall stood up and began to clap their hands loudly. "Three cheers for Magda!" someone cried.

"Hip-Hip! Hurrah! Hip-Hip! Hurrah! Hip-Hip! Hurrah!" they all shouted.

"Why, I understood every word. Yes, now I can understand American!" Magda said to herself, her eyes wet with tears.

(Adapted from 'Thanksgiving Day' by D.C. Fisher)

Choose the most suitable answer for each question and put the answer on the answer sheet.

27. Americans usually have \_\_\_\_\_ at their Thanksgiving dinner.

- A. fish
- C. turkey

- B. chicken
  - D. beef
- 

28. All the people stood up and clapped loudly after Magda said her prayer because \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. they were happy to see Magda end her dull and boring prayer
  - B. they were happy to hear "Amen!" from their Principal
  - C. they were happy that Magda's English was getting better
  - D. they all shared Magda's feeling at that time
- 

29. "Yes, now I can understand American!" Magda said to herself.

She meant she understood \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. how to pray in America
  - B. the directness and openness of Americans
  - C. American humour
  - D. American English
- 

..... END .....



ANSWER SHEET

School: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_

Religion: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
                             day / month / year                              year : month

Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_

Length of Stay in Hong Kong: \_\_\_\_\_ years

Answers: Write down the LETTER only.

## Part A

- |          |           |           |           |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____  | 11. _____ | 17. _____ | 22. _____ | 27. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____  | 12. _____ | 18. _____ | 23. _____ | 28. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____  | 13. _____ | 19. _____ | 24. _____ | 29. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____  | 14. _____ | 20. _____ | 25. _____ |           |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ | 15. _____ | 21. _____ | 26. _____ |           |
|          |           | 16. _____ |           |           |           |

## Part B

How much contact do you have  
with the British and American  
tradition, customs and  
culture?

(Please tick ✓ )

- \_\_\_\_\_ Never
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rare
- \_\_\_\_\_ Occasional
- \_\_\_\_\_ Periodic
- \_\_\_\_\_ Regular
- \_\_\_\_\_ Frequent

How much contact do you have  
with the Chinese tradition,  
customs and culture?

(Please tick ✓ )

- \_\_\_\_\_ Never
- \_\_\_\_\_ Rare
- \_\_\_\_\_ Occasional
- \_\_\_\_\_ Periodic
- \_\_\_\_\_ Regular
- \_\_\_\_\_ Frequent

....THANK YOU VERY MUCH....

Key

	British culture	Chinese culture	American culture
Tradition & Customs	(1) A (4) B (6) A (7) D (9) C	(2) C (3) B (5) D (8) B (10) C	(27) C
Attitudes & values	(12) A (14) B (16) A	(11) D (13) C (15) D	(28) D (29) B
Beliefs	(18) A (20) C (22) D (23) B (25) D	(17) B (19) A (21) B (24) A (26) C	



Appendix 4B

## READING TEST

Time Allowed: 30 minutes

Instructions:

1. There are 10 pages in this question paper. The test consists of Part A and Part B.
2. Answer all questions in the test.
3. All the answers should be marked on the Answer Sheet.
4. Please check that all questions have been answered before the end of the test.
5. The question paper and the answer sheet will be collected after the test.

Part A

Read the short passages carefully. Choose the most suitable answer for each question and put the answer on the answer sheet.

- 
1. Mr White: What's the score ( 賽 果 ) ?

Mr Smith: Yorkshire ( 约 克 郡 ) were all out for 403 runs.

What game are they talking about?

- |                     |                      |
|---------------------|----------------------|
| A. Cricket ( 板 球 ). | B. Rugby ( 橄 榄 球 ).  |
| C. Hunting ( 打 獵 ). | D. Football ( 足 球 ). |
- 

2. John: What are those things?

Siu Ming: Rice dumplings ( 粽 ). We always have them at this time of a year.

At what festival do the Chinese usually eat rice dumplings?

- |                          |                         |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| A. Chinese New Year.     | B. Mid-Autumn Festival. |
| C. Dragon Boat Festival. | D. Ching Ming Festival. |
- 

3. Tina: Look! There's a pair of white lanterns ( 燈 籠 ) hanging in front of that house.

Guide: Mm. This is a Chinese way of telling people that \_\_\_\_\_.

- |   |
|---|
| A. someone has got married                |
| B. someone has died                       |
| C. someone has had a new baby             |
| D. someone has just won a fortune ( 財 富 ) |
-



4. Shopkeeper: Salt and vinegar ( 醋 ) on it?

Customer: Yes, please. Just a little, though.

What kind of food is the customer buying?

A. Hamburgers.  
C. Noodles.

B. Fish and chips.  
D. Steaks.

5. Mei Mei: Uncle John is going to move into his new house next week.  
What shall we buy for him?

Mother: We could send him a Chinese painting but definitely not  
-----.

A. a cooker  
C. a table

B. a book  
D. a clock

6. Jane: Mum, what should I wear?

Mother: A black dress, I think. No brightly-coloured clothes,  
please.

They are going to -----.

A. a funeral ( 葬禮 )  
C. a birthday party ( 生日會 )

B. church ( 教堂 )  
D. a dinner party ( 晚宴 )

7. It was Saturday afternoon. The milkman came and he knocked at  
John's door. No one answered.

He left a message: "I'll come again later today."

The milkman will come again -----.

A. to get milk for John  
C. to collect milk bottles

B. to talk with John  
D. to collect money for the milk

8. Mr Lee is having a meal in a Chinese restaurant. The food he ordered has just come.

Mr Lee: Could I have the sweet and sour plum sauce (酸梅醬)?  
It goes with this dish, doesn't it?

Waiter: Oh, sorry. I'll get it right away.

What dish has Mr Lee ordered?

- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| A. Roast chicken. | B. Roast duck. |
| C. Steamed fish.  | D. Pork chop.  |
- 

9. John: Good morning. Can I speak to Peter, please?

Mary: I'm afraid he's not here. Would you mind calling him up again after the tea-break?

What time did Mary ask John to telephone Peter?

- |                  |                 |
|------------------|-----------------|
| A. After 7 a.m.  | B. After 9 a.m. |
| C. After 11 a.m. | D. After 1 p.m. |
- 

10. The Chan family have just had a new baby.

Mr Chan: When shall we have our celebration (慶祝) with our relatives (親友)?

Mrs Chan: Well, according to Chinese customs (習俗), we should have it -----.

- |                  |                      |
|------------------|----------------------|
| A. a week later  | B. three weeks later |
| C. a month later | D. two months later  |
-



11. Chi Ming's grandmother came to visit him. Chi Ming's mother led her to the sitting room.

Mother: Would you like a cup of tea?

Grandmother: Yes, please.

Mother: Get grandma a cup of tea, Chi Ming. Be polite and -----

Chi Ming: Yes, mum.

- A. taste the tea first
- B. get some tea for yourself, too
- C. get the tea with one hand
- D. get the tea with both hands

12. Siu Ming met Tim yesterday.

"Tim, you have got a new job (工作) recently. How much do you earn (賺取)?" he asked.

What kind of person do you think Siu Ming is?

- |                     |                 |
|---------------------|-----------------|
| A. Impolite (不禮貌的). | B. Kind (友善的).  |
| C. Caring (關懷的).    | D. Proud (高傲的). |

13. Mr Chan invited a lot of friends to a banquet (宴會) in a splendid (華麗的) Chinese restaurant.

Before the meal started, he said, "I don't have much food to serve you. Please help yourselves."

What kind of person do you think Mr Chan is?

- |                  |                        |
|------------------|------------------------|
| A. Poor (貧窮的).   | B. Honest (誠實的).       |
| C. Modest (謙遜的). | D. Hypocritical (虛偽的). |

14. John got off the bus at a crowded bus-stop and waved goodbye to David.

"Phone me tonight, John," David shouted as loud as he could from the upper deck (上層).

What kind of person do you think David is?

- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| A. Thoughtful (有心想的). | B. Impolite (不禮貌的). |
| C. Impatient (不耐煩的).  | D. Smart (醒目的).     |
- 

15. An old Chinese man was sitting quietly in a park.

A little girl came and said to him, "You look strong and healthy. How old are you?"

What would the old man's most likely reaction/response (反應) be?

- A. He would thank the girl but would not tell her his age.  
B. He would be very angry and would not answer her question.  
C. He would get up and walk away.  
D. He would be happy to tell her his age.
- 

16. Sam is taking part in a Quiz Competition (問答比賽).

The question 'What is man's best friend?' comes up.

Straight away, Sam shouts out his answer.

What answer does he give?

- |               |                   |
|---------------|-------------------|
| A. His dog.   | B. His neighbour. |
| C. His money. | D. His brother.   |
-



17. Mrs So: I dropped the mirror ( 鏡子 ) this morning and it broke.  
You know what that means, don't you? -----.

Mr So: Come on. Don't be so superstitious ( 迷信 ).

- A. We're going to be rich
  - B. We're going to have some bad luck
  - C. We're going to have a baby
  - D. One of us is going to find a new job
- 

18. Peter asked Jane and Rose a question. They both shouted the answer to Peter at the same time.

Peter: How did you get here today?

Jane and Rose: By MTR.

Peter: -----.

- A. There's a letter in the post for one of you
  - B. Someone is waiting for you at home
  - C. Your dogs need feeding
  - D. It's going to rain
- 

19. Mr Chan: You know, I've been sneezing ( 打噴嚏 ) for the whole morning.

Mrs Chan: Mm. You know what that means, don't you? -----.

- A. Someone is talking about you
  - B. You're going to have some bad luck
  - C. It is going to rain
  - D. Someone is going to visit us today
- 

20. Passing under a ladder ( 梯 ) brings -----.

- |                       |                    |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| A. good health ( 健康 ) | B. wealth ( 財富 )   |
| C. bad luck ( 惡運 )    | D. quarrels ( 爭執 ) |
-

21. Mei Mei: Mum. Why are you putting those leaves in the boiling water?

Mother: Oh, they're pomelo leaves (柚葉). The water -----.

- A. will make me look younger and prettier
  - B. will wash away my bad luck
  - C. will remove all my pains
  - D. will cure my skin problems
- 

22. Eating cheese (芝士) late at night is believed to -----.

- A. bring bad luck (惡運)
  - B. bring illness (疾病)
  - C. give you money trouble (麻煩)
  - D. give you nightmares (噩夢)
- 

23. Bob met Mary and Sue. He pointed at them.

Bob: Someone is talking about you.

Mary and Sue: How do you know?

Bob: That's easy. You've got red -----.

- A. noses
  - B. ears
  - C. cheeks
  - D. eyes
- 

24. Mr Chan went to play mahjong with his friends. On his way, he met a Chinese monk (和尚). He felt that ----- that day.

- A. he would lose the game
  - B. a friend would visit him
  - C. he would be lucky
  - D. he would have an accident
-



25. George and Simon were having a picnic in the countryside.

Simon: What a nice day it is today!

George: No. It's going to rain.

Simon: How do you know?

George: Look! -----.

- A. Treetops are moving
  - B. Birds are flying over our heads
  - C. Butterflies are dancing by that stream
  - D. Cows are lying down in the field
- 

26. It was Dragon Boat Festival yesterday.

Father: Tom, let's go swimming today.

Tom: Why don't we leave it till next week? I'd like to watch the Dragon Boat Race.

Father: No, come on. The weather is just right for a swim. And you know that we Chinese believe that ----- after the swim today.

- A. we'll be richer
  - B. our children will be taller
  - C. we'll be free of evils ( 霉氣 )
  - D. we'll lose any unhappy memories ( 往事 ) we may have
-

Part B

Read the passage carefully.

Magda had just come to America. She went to a school in a small town. She knew little English. She did not understand American humour (幽默) and she laughed over things that were not funny at all. Her schoolmates did not like her and used to say, "Wow, what a strange girl!"

Then Thanksgiving Day came. Everybody in school was to do something like sing and put on a short play for the celebration. Magda decided she would like to say a prayer.

On Thanksgiving Day a lot of parents came to school to watch their children play before they took them home for Thanksgiving dinner. They all enjoyed watching their children sing and play.

Then it was Magda's turn. Her heart was beating fast as she got ready to say her prayer. She put her hands together over her head and said, "Oh thank you, thank you, dear God, for letting my grandfather and me come to America. I learn from my history book that Americans all came to this country just how Grandfather and I come. Thanksgiving, to be here free and safe. I, too, feel the same beautiful thank-you-God, that all we Americans say here today."

She did not know how to end her prayer, though. She just walked back to join her class. The Principal said "Amen!" for her. And then, all of a sudden, all the people in the hall stood up and began to clap their hands loudly. "Three cheers for Magda!" someone cried.

"Hip-Hip! Hurrah! Hip-Hip! Hurrah! Hip-Hip! Hurrah!" they all shouted.

"Why, I understood every word. Yes, now I can understand American!" Magda said to herself, her eyes wet with tears.

(Adapted from 'Thanksgiving Day' by D.C. Fisher)



Choose the most suitable answer for each question and put the answer on the answer sheet.

27. Americans usually have \_\_\_\_\_ at their Thanksgiving dinner.

- |                |                |
|----------------|----------------|
| A. fish (魚)    | B. chicken (雞) |
| C. turkey (火雞) | D. beef (牛肉)   |
- 

28. All the people stood up and clapped loudly after Magda said her prayer because \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. they were happy to see Magda end her dull and boring prayer
  - B. they were happy to hear "Amen!" from their Principal
  - C. they were happy that Magda's English was getting better
  - D. they all shared Magda's feeling at that time
- 

29. "Yes, now I can understand American!" Magda said to herself.

She meant she understood \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. how to pray in America
  - B. the directness and openness of Americans
  - C. American humour
  - D. American English
- 

..... END .....

ANSWER SHEET

School: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Religion: \_\_\_\_\_ Sex: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Age: \_\_\_\_\_  
                     day / month / year                      year : month  
 Place of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Nationality: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Length of Stay in Hong Kong: \_\_\_\_\_ years

Answers: Write down the LETTER only.

## Part A

- |          |           |           |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 6. _____  | 11. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 7. _____  | 12. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 8. _____  | 13. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 9. _____  | 14. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 10. _____ | 15. _____ |
|          |           | 16. _____ |

## Part B

- |           |           |           |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 17. _____ | 22. _____ | 27. _____ |
| 18. _____ | 23. _____ | 28. _____ |
| 19. _____ | 24. _____ | 29. _____ |
| 20. _____ | 25. _____ |           |
| 21. _____ | 26. _____ |           |

How much contact do you have  
with the British and American  
tradition, customs and  
culture?

你接觸英美傳統、習俗  
及文化有多少？

(Please tick ✓)

- |                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| _____ Never      | (從沒有) |
| _____ Rare       | (很少的) |
| _____ Occasional | (偶然的) |
| _____ Periodic   | (間斷的) |
| _____ Regular    | (經常的) |
| _____ Frequent   | (頻密的) |

How much contact do you have  
with the Chinese tradition,  
customs and culture?

你接觸中國傳統、習俗  
及文化有多少？

(Please tick ✓)

- |                  |       |
|------------------|-------|
| _____ Never      | (從沒有) |
| _____ Rare       | (很少的) |
| _____ Occasional | (偶然的) |
| _____ Periodic   | (間斷的) |
| _____ Regular    | (經常的) |
| _____ Frequent   | (頻密的) |

....THANK YOU VERY MUCH....



Appendix 5

Reliability of Test Items

Types	Cultural Elements	British	Chinese
British Culture	Tradition & Customs	0.128	0.140
	Attitude & Values	0.176	0.199
	Beliefs	0.277	0.182
	Total	0.345	0.258
American Culture		0.480	0.114
Anglo-American Culture		0.458	0.285
Chinese Culture	Tradition & Customs	0.004	0.585
	Attitude & Values	-0.041	0.445
	Beliefs	0.072	0.659
	Total	0.031	0.799
Grand Total		0.361	0.741

Appendix 6

## Validity of Test Items in Different Forms

Types	B1	B3	B5	C1	C3	C5
British Culture	0.164	0.361	0.081	0.085	-0.011	-0.079
American Culture	-0.067	0.104	-0.009	0.034	-0.181	0.262
Anglo-American Culture	0.101	0.354	0.064	0.086	-0.095	0.055
Chinese Culture	0.234	0.166	0.278	-0.058	0.378	0.010



Appendix 7

Correct Responses of the Reading Test  
(In Percentage)

Type	Item No.	B1	B3	B5	Subjects C1	C3	C5
<u>British Culture</u>							
Tradition & Customs	1	100.0	100.0	100.0	14.3	28.6	34.3
	4	100.0	100.0	100.0	25.7	17.1	11.4
	6	65.7	85.7	85.7	77.1	85.7	97.1
	7	74.3	88.6	85.7	14.3	34.3	37.1
	9	45.7	62.9	57.1	8.6	5.7	20.0
Attitudes & Values	12	65.7	82.9	88.6	11.4	25.7	48.6
	14	45.7	51.4	48.6	42.9	57.1	71.4
	16	100.0	97.1	100.0	25.7	22.9	40.0
Beliefs	18	22.9	25.7	28.6	5.7	17.1	17.1
	20	100.0	97.1	100.0	45.7	51.4	65.7
	22	80.0	85.7	85.7	60.0	51.4	68.6
	23	34.3	74.3	74.3	25.7	42.9	37.1
	25	51.4	62.9	65.7	11.4	8.6	17.1
<u>Chinese Culture</u>							
Tradition & Customs	2	28.6	22.9	20.0	74.3	85.7	94.3
	3	8.6	20.0	25.7	57.1	77.1	91.4
	5	25.7	20.0	28.6	20.0	51.4	74.3
	8	54.3	54.3	40.0	40.0	68.5	91.4
	10	14.3	11.4	22.9	71.4	82.9	94.3
Attitudes & Values	11	40.0	48.6	34.3	51.4	71.4	100.0
	13	11.4	14.3	22.9	42.9	42.9	88.6
	15	25.7	25.7	42.9	60.0	68.6	77.1
Beliefs	17	97.1	100.0	100.0	65.7	77.1	97.1
	19	17.1	22.9	20.0	68.6	65.7	94.3
	21	25.7	22.9	20.0	54.3	68.6	94.3
	24	22.9	22.9	2.9	22.9	40.0	94.3
	26	65.7	54.3	62.9	60.0	48.6	68.6
<u>American Culture</u>							
	27	80.0	80.0	94.3	31.4	48.6	40.0
	28	62.9	82.9	71.4	22.9	17.1	45.7
	29	28.6	51.4	71.4	20.0	14.3	25.7





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